CHAPTER II

Small Farm Economy

THE small farmers' family groups inhabit the holdings or plots of land from which they make the livelihood we have described numerically. Except in a few and special cases, there is no physical separation of house plot from fields; the individual family's plot is usually a continuous one, and the other forms of settlement present in Ireland are rapidly being reshaped with that condition as the ideal. Consequently, the farmhouse is most often, though not always, a comparatively isolated house standing upon its own ground and forming an integral part of the holding. In it the farm family group spends its entire life, sleeping, eating, giving birth and dying there, and sallying forth every day for work upon the fields.

The farm family lives and performs almost all of its work within this spatial unit of land and house. And the unit is identified with the family in the eyes of its community in name and ownership. Outside this range, the farmer has little participation in affairs in comparison with others of the population. His wife and children have even less. Within this range most of the activity marking the relations of the human beings who make up the group takes place.

The "land," as we have seen, is usually divided into "field," "meadow," "garden," "bog," and "mountain," according to its character and agricultural use. These divisions make up the holding and represent the productive

[p. 31]

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
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CHAPTER X

The Old in the Community[1]

LET us examine the life of a local community in the rural "West of Ireland" and put to the test of observation the claim that the clique of evening visitors among the old men of the community plays a decisive role in its social life. Perhaps Rynamona already mentioned affords the best example. Yet any other community the authors knew well would afford as good a one. In all of them the old men met in much the same way and, in spite of different names and persons, acted in much the same way to form a similar old men's clique. By taking the example of Rynamona, we can throw the generalities of this conduct into relief.

Rynamona is a medium-sized townland in the limestone country of North Clare. It is like many another in the "good land" of rough limestone outcrops stretching back from the sea into the glaciated lakes strewn north in County Clare. To reach Rynamona is no easy task, even for horse and car. The main road north out of Corrofin to Kilfenora passes through Kilnaboy, where twelve houses, a school, a chapel, and a post office are all that remains of an antiquity preserved to the eye only in the ninth-century church and graveyard.

There, beside the graveyard, a side road leads off toward

[1] Much of the material in this chapter is taken from *The Irish Countryman* (London: The Macmillan Company, 1936), by Conrad M. Arensberg. It is used here by permission of the publishers.

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[p. 181]

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

Glanquin Mountain and the hills of Burren beyond. Along it one passes through ragged upland for a mile and a half. This is Kilnaboy Commons, and its many small fields bear witness to its having been a refuge of the evicted, laboriously cleared of stones. The upland is not high. It merely gives rise enough to start a half mile of gentle slope downward into a basin filled with a little lake. Rynamona lies round the lake.

The fields here are cleared, too, and cut up between with limestone ridges. But the grass grows richly among the crags and ridges. The farmers are a fairly prosperous lot.

Eight of their houses stand in an irregular cluster on the lake shore. This is Rynamona village. Five others are scattered through the fields and across the lake. These households and a few more a little further off make up the community. These are small farms of the kind we met in Luogh. No one has more than nine cows; and only one has fewer than two. Except for the eight houses huddled in the village, fields and meadows stretch away from the haggard gate. In the case of the villagers' holdings, the arrangement is not much different. Their fields are scattered about and behind their haggards in irregular patterns. In addition to these fields, most of them have several acres, carved out for them by the Land Commission on an estate about two miles off.

Rynamona is a closely knit community. Reduplicated bonds of kinship unite all the households. "We are all related one way or another," they describe it. Cooring is the usual form of coöperation, and the village as a whole holds itself responsible amid grumbles for the maintenance of the borheen (road) which leads out to the outside world of the towns. Nowadays the County Council pays the sons who break stones and lay them in the winter months, but the village still assigns a bit of the road to each householder. Small matter if the borheen is bad, for a well-trod maze of

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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A VILLAGE ON A HILLTOP WITH ITS GARDENS AND PASTURES

[facing p. 182]

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

farmers converge upon Ennis. In each case a center, whether a larger market town or one of the smaller villages, serves a natural area demarcated by the configuration of the land and the course of the roads.

In such natural regions, particularly in more remote and mountainous country, the roads determine the intercourse of the communities with one another. Today each focal point is joined with another by a motor road. As the roads wind out from the larger centers, shops come to be placed at the strategic crossroad; a public house springs up; perhaps a schoolhouse, a parochial house, a chapel of the parish, rise beside them. Nowadays creameries are put up at these or still other points along the roads, where they are most conveniently accessible to small and medium farms producing milk. Even more recently lorries have begun to come direct to the crossroad to pick up produce that once, before motor traffic, had to be carried by the farmers themselves all the way to town.

Plotting out the market areas of the towns and villages of the countryside reveals a characteristic of social and economic space even here where the deepest hinterlands are never more than a half-day's leisurely trip by horse and cart. Any list of customers plotted by residence around a minor center gives an area which extends considerably farther in the direction away from the nearest larger center than it does in the direction leading to it. The minor centers draw principally from the hinterlands behind them and their areas extend only a little way along the roads in the direction of the next larger center. Ennistymon in North Clare draws custom twelve miles to the north, but to the south its influence reaches only three miles up the valley of the Inagh River, where the region of the larger center, Ennis, begins. Ennis itself serves all Clare, and its own immediate area extends, to judge from the residences of the farmers who come to buy and sell in her markets, beyond Ennistymon

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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The interlocking net of roads covering Clare high and low must have been fairly complete at an early period. In high country many of the roads were "famine roads," built to give relief during the "bad times." In lower, richer land they are older. They ran originally from one concentration of estates to another, reflecting the older social order. Even today there is still a considerable amount of new road building carried on by local authorities, opening up districts which formerly had little or no communication with the outside world. There are still many farmhouses and village clusters of farmhouses far away from any improved road in higher country. Their inhabitants rely on rough borheens and stony trails leading from the nearest road. Many such isolated houses were originally built in inaccessible parts of hills and bogs to keep their owners from the eyes of bog rangers and estate stewards and to hide them from the threat of eviction.

Today the roads are kept up by the county government and the state. The system of road labor is very old. Private contracts for stones, maintenance, and repair and gang work under county officials are still important sources of outside work for the farm communities and occasions of local relief important in county politics.

The small farmer today uses five principal methods of travel. Choice among these is determined by the nature of one's errand and the status of the traveler.

The motor car is the newest and most costly method of transport. Small farmers do not own motor cars. They hire them from the towns when occasion arises. The motor car is still in process of introduction into the Irish Free State. In the countryside it is used only in time of crisis and high ceremony. If a member of a farm family needs hospital attention, he is removed to the nearest hospital, either in a private motor car or in the free county ambulance. At a wedding and an important funeral a family may engage

2: Campbell B, E-5 (1934-1935) 1937 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Galway

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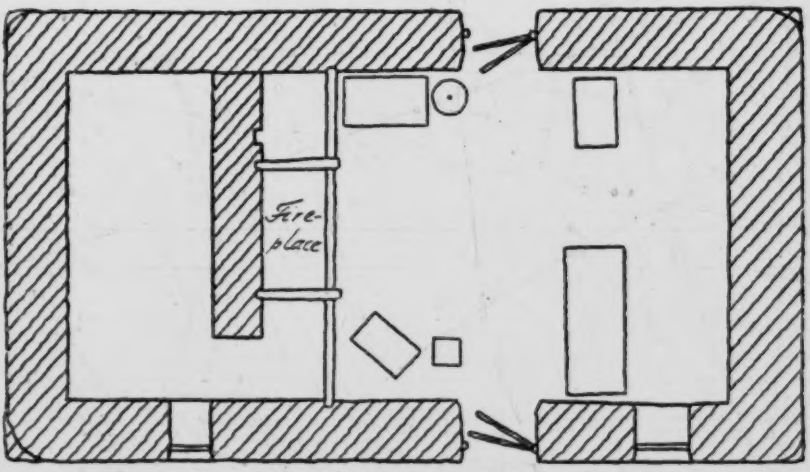

Fig. 3. Central-chimney house. Spiddle, Co. Galway.

stands out in bold relief against its background, but melts into it even as a tree or a rock. Built of stone, clay, sods, grass and straw brought from the vicinity, the house harmonizes with the landscape to which it belongs. Whenever the old building traditions are faithfully maintained its features are of a fine simplicity.

Here I shall not describe how the house has been determined by the different types of landscape, and by the social structure of the human community, to which it belongs. I only observe that the settlements and houses often are scattered but sometimes can be found built in groups or rows. 361 342

Very archaic dwelling houses generally are erected on a slope, the difference in level between the high end and the low end of the house being one, two or three feet. In houses where the farm animals have been under the same roof as the family, the places for the animals always were at the low end and the fireplace and bedplaces at the high end. This is the same arrangement as in the Scottish black houses.

The floor. The floor is commonly earthen, but generally paved at the fireplace. Now and then the upper end of the house is totally paved, or the whole floor is flagged. Very often the place round the fire is distinctly separated from the rest of the floor by its special paving. In modern times the floor is very often concrete. A covering with wooden boards at the upper end of the house and in the bedroom is often to be seen now-a-days. The stone or earth- 342

3: Campbell B, E-5 (1934-1935) 1938 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Galway

342 tive builder has replaced the doomed roof by the thatched roof if, naturally, timber and material for thatching were at hand.

A great number of houses of this type have been in use as late as the 19th century in remote parts of Ireland. Many references are given in the travel sketches and other literature of that time.

Particular attention may be called to the houses in Achill, Co. Galway, which belong to booleying settlements.

Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Hall, describing the island of Achill[12a] tell us about a certain kind of booleying (the cattle were brought down towards the coast when the season for fishing was on). They sketch the houses in a picture, pl. 34,a, and in words:

"The habitations of the islanders are very singular. Their houses are heaps of rude stones moulded by the tide, procured from the beach, uncemented; they are rounded at the gables, and roofed with fern, heath, and shingles, fastened on by straw bands. In the village of Dooagha, consisting [556] of about forty cabins, there is not a single chimney. Some of the wealthier graziers, however, have an odd custom of residing in such houses, or in houses [221] of a still more simple construction, only during the summer months, when the season for fishing is "on", and their cattle are brought down towards [231] the coast to feed on the young herbage. These hovels, they call 'Builly houses'."

From another traveller, Caesar Otway, who made a short excursion in Achill in the summer 1838, can be collected some valuable informations.[12b] Otway mentions (p. 353, 356) a certain type of wall construction, viz, the pilledpin double wall: two dry stone walls with the interspace filled in with sand. This is the same archaic construction, which Thomas describes from Lewis. It is also known from archaeological excavations in Scandinavia and elsewhere.

342 "An Achill village consisted of congeries of hovels thrown indiscriminate●361 tely together, as if they fell in a shower from the sky, and their construction was as follows: — a dry stone wall was built of a form like an obtuse oval, for they had not arrived at the art of making a square quoin, or erecting a gable end. Outside this wall, and at about a foot distance, another loose wall was run up, and the space between the two filled with sea sand, and then this was roofed, generally with timber washed on shore from wrecks, and covered with heath, which covering did not reach over the outside wall, and form an eave, but rested on the middle between the walls, and the moisture from above passed, as it should, through the intervening sand."

"— — — we entered the village of Dugurth. Just such a village as I

3: Campbell B, E-5 (1934-1935) 1938 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Galway

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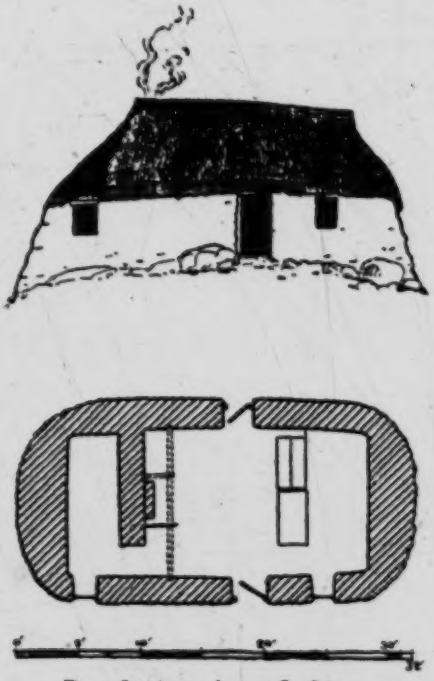

Fig. 4. Oval house. Inveran, Co. Galway.

have above described, but certainly containing some houses that *had* gable-ends; but for the most part of the construction I have alluded to, a dirty, dreary, uncouth place — — —." 342 361 221

Later on (p. 401) Otway has learnt to know the summerherding (booley-ing) and the difference between winterhouses and summerhouses, and he compares the Irish summerhouses with the Swiss *chalets*.

"Keem, I said, was a singular village; it is only inhabited in summer — who would suppose that the Achillians had such a superfluity of houses, that they had both their winter and summer residences. The Greenlanders and Esquimaux are so changeful, from their excessive vicissitudes of heat and cold — but here I was surprised to find empty every house but two (and these were the residences of the coast-guard), all with their doors fastened

3: Campbell B, E-5 (1934-1935) 1938 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Galway

342 and untenanted; and certainly such miserable wigwams, I had never be-
361 fore seen — all built, as I have already described, without gable-ends. It
221 seems the owners of the village of Keem, and the renters of the adjoining district, have other houses in a distant part of the island, where they spend the winter and spring; thence they come when their oats and potatoes are planted and spend the summer months, herding their cattle on these heights, and leading a pastoral life. Thus in Switzerland they have their chalets on the hills, and in old times in Ireland the creaghts (as they were called) had their boolies on the mountains; but I don't think I ever saw a summer-herding village before."

342 What is said to have been the last oval house in Achill (pl. 33,a), was destroyed in the last two years. An old man (he is seen in the doorway) had lived in it and would not change to any other kind of residence. When he died, the house was pulled down.

This house had dry stone walls. In the middle of the floor stood a beam of bog fir from the top of which beams and branches, also of bog fir, spread out like the ribs of an umbrella, to carry the thatched roof. (This central beam may have been a temporary structure? Cf. p. 192 about the *tuireadh* of the wickerwork house described by O'Curry). The house had no windows and no chimney. The smoke came out through a hole in the roof.

In the year 1936, I measured an inhabited oval house in Inveran, Co. Galway, fig. 4 and pl. 34, b, 35, a, b. This house embodies many interesting features known from prehistoric times. It is built upon very uneven ground and runs from east to west. The several feet thick walls slope as the walls of the oval clochán from the ground upwards. In later times these, built as dry stone walls, have been plastered from outside and whitelimed and the windows added.

The interior is made up by one room, which, however, is divided up to the west by the hob and a protecting wall behind it. Here is the bedroom, in harmony with the wide-spread old tradition mentioned in my former article.[185] To the east, a dresser and a table cut off the lower part to form another bed-alcove.

The house has no outside chimney, but a basket resting on beams leads the smoke out through a hole in the roof. This basket is wattled from osiers and covered with plaster. As the wall behind the fireplace does not go up as far as the roof, canvas is hung to complete the wall.

There are the usual two doors, central and opposite to each other.[186] The roof of straw, scollop-thatched, rests on couples of beams, supported on the

[TEXT CONTINUES TOP OF P. 189 ---- ANALYST]

PLATE 33.

a. Oval house. Keel, Achill, Co. Mayo. Photographed in 1903.
b. Clochán, used for storage purpose. Blasket Island.

3: Campbell: B, E-5 (1934-1935) 1938 ER6 Rural Irish ER6

PLATE 34

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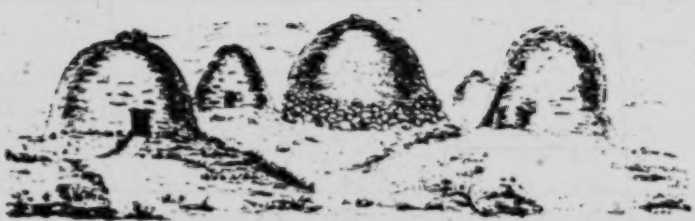

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[Captions on p. 189]

than 30 statute acres is regarded as small, one of from 30 to 100 acres as of medium size and one of over 100 acres as large. Small, medium and large farms may be found in all parts of Ireland, but in the provinces of Leinster and Munster and in parts of south east Connaught there is a preponderance of medium sized farms with, especially in north Leinster, a considerable proportion of large farms.[1] All this area practises mixed farming, but the south western province, Munster, is completely dominated by the milking cow, while in Leinster the northern half is mainly devoted to the raising of beef cattle, and the southern half produces considerable quantities of wheat, oats and barley.[2] In most areas of Connaught and Ulster, the western and northern provinces, the average farm is of small size, and the number of cows kept by each farmer correspondingly small; the value and productivity of these small farms, however, vary greatly from the intensive cultivation of many farms in east and south Ulster to the fisher-farmer economy of the west coastal districts.[3]

Throughout the provinces of Leinster and Munster, and in parts of east Connaught, that is to say, generally in the area of medium and large farms, the predominant, and in many districts exclusive, farmyard type is the courtyard, in which the dwelling house and outhouses are arranged about a rectangular space which is the farmyard proper. Most usually the buildings form three sides of the yard, with the dwelling house forming one side and the outhouses forming two more, the fourth side being closed by a wall with a gate. Usually the building is not continuous, the elements being separate and connected by walls, or having gateways or passages between them. The size and arrangement of the yard and the various buildings vary from one farm to another, and also from district to district; the general type is, however, well established, and conforms to a pattern which is clearly distinguished from the other types to be described later. In many districts the front of the dwelling house faces the farmyard, thus, in Co. Kildare in 1807: "The farmhouses in general consist of a long thatched building of one storey, consisting of a large kitchen and fireplace in the centre, and lodging rooms at either end; the front door looks to the barns and stables on the right, behind which is the haggard, and on the left are placed the cow and bullock houses." This, written a century and a half ago,[4] exactly describes many of the farmyards of to-day, for example that shown in fig. 1, which has the dwelling house in the middle, the cowhouse, calf-house and a small store (formerly a dairy) on the left, with the manure heap behind them, while on the right are the stable, another store and the pigstye, with the haggard, where the hay and corn stacks are made, behind them. The fourth side is formed by a stone wall, with a gate; this wall fronts on the public roadway. This farmyard is at Duncormick, Co. Wexford, in the south east corner of Ireland, but similar examples may be found in almost every part of the east and south. Figure 2 shows the buildings on a larger farm, also in Co. Wexford. Here the entrance gate leads in between a cart shed on the right and the dairy on the left, with the pump close by. Facing the dwelling house across the yard are the stable and byre and a store, while the corn barn opens into the haggard. The pigsty and manure heap are in the part of the yard most distant from the dwelling house. The openings between the various buildings are closed by stone walls about

[Text continues on p. 12]

[1] Agricultural Statistics, 1847–1926. Stationery Office, Dublin, 1930.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Freeman, T. W.: Ireland, Its Physical, Historical, Social and Economic Geography, 1950, chapters VIII and XVIII to XXIII.

[4] Rawson, T. J.: Statistical Survey of the County of Kildare, 1807, 14–15.

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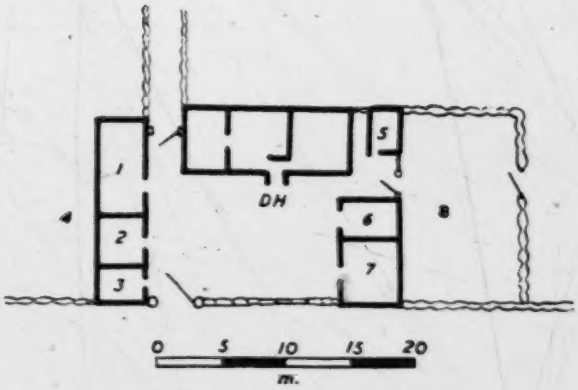

Fig. 1. Farmyard at Duncormick, Co. Wexford. DH, dwelling house; 1, byre; 2, calf house; 3, store; 4, manure heap; 5, pigsty; 6, cart house; 7, stable; 8, haggard.

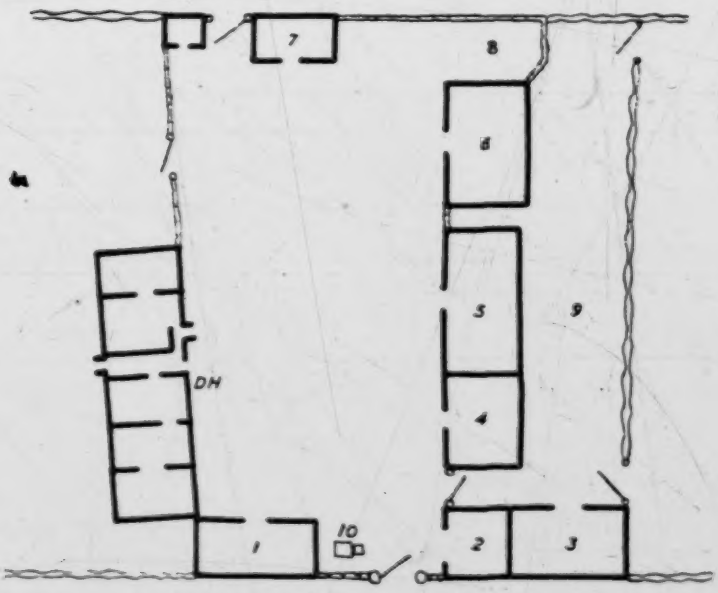

Fig. 2. Farmyard at Kilmore, Co. Wexford. DH, dwelling house; 1, dairy; 2, cart house; 3, corn barn; 4, stable; 5, byre; 6, store; 7, pigsty; 8, manure heap; 9, haggard; 10, pump.

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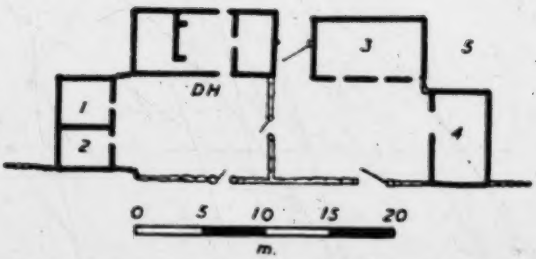

Fig. 3. Farmyard, Killinny, Co. Galway. DH, dwelling house; 1, dairy; 2, store; 3, byre, 4, stable and carts; 5, manure heap.

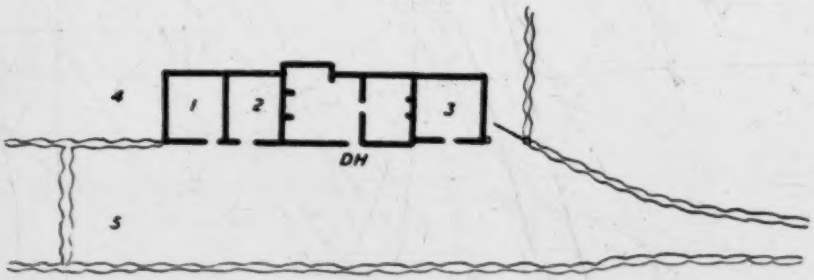

Fig. 4. Farmyard at Glenhull, Co. Tyrone. DH, dwelling house; 1, byre; 2, stable; 3, store; 4, haggard; 5, manure heap.

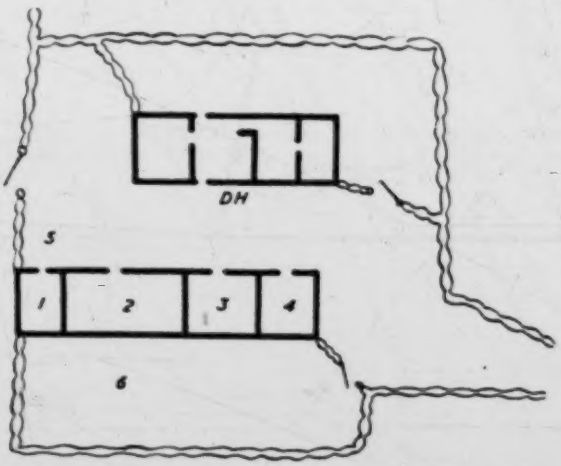

Fig. 5. Farmyard, Athea, Co. Limerick. DH, dwelling house; 1, pigs; 2, byre; 3, stable; 4, store; 5, manure heap; 6, haggard.

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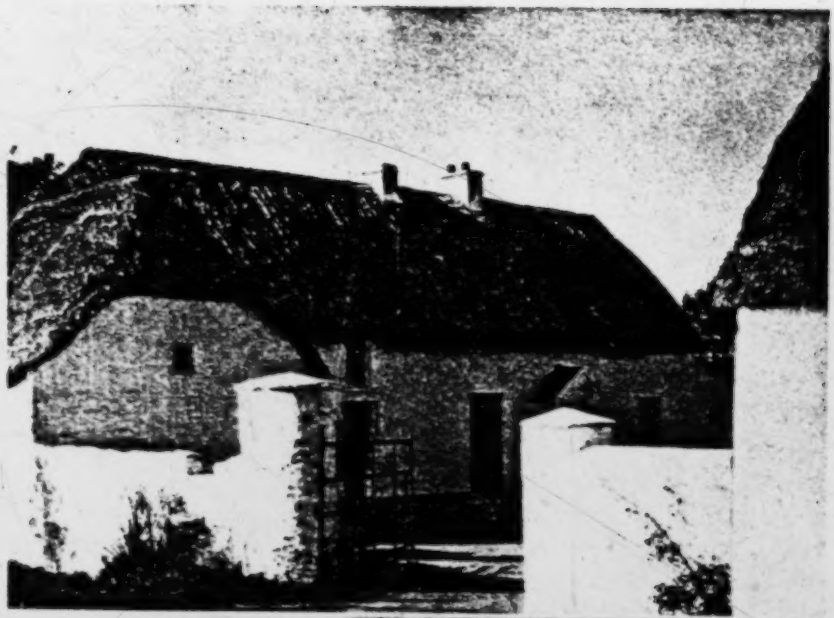

Fig. 6. Farmhouse and yard, Kilmore, Co. Wexford (fig. 2).

Fig. 7. Farmyard, Kilfinny, Co. Galway (fig. 3).

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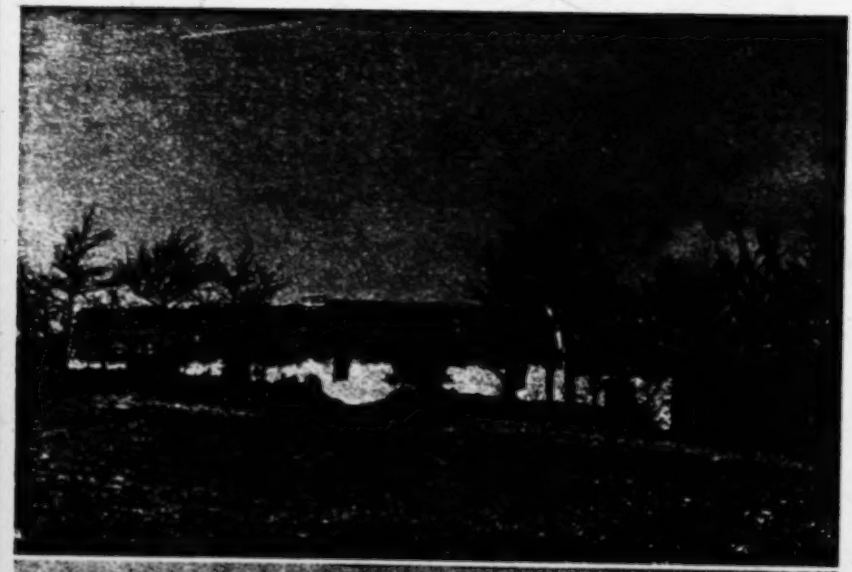

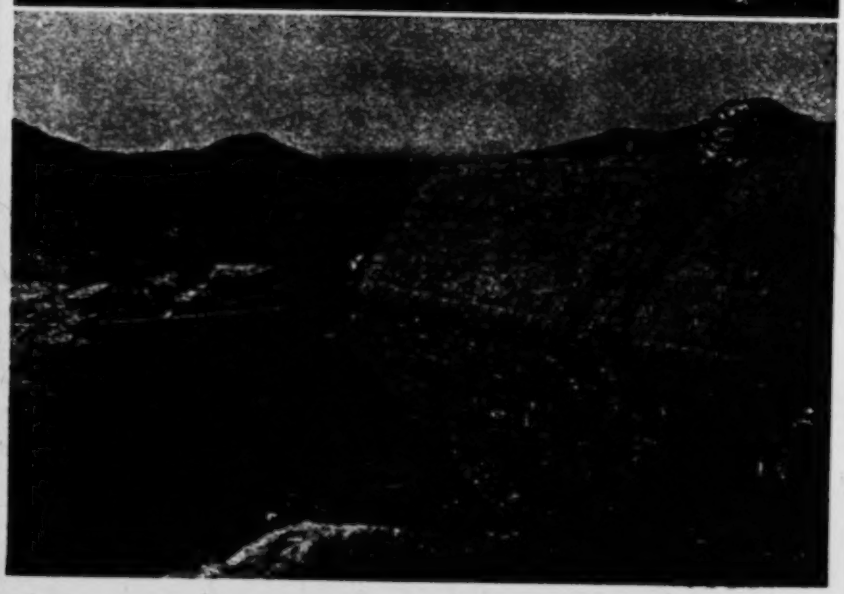

Fig. 8. Farm buildings, Glenhull, Co. Tyrone (fig. 4).
Fig. 9. Farm buildings, parallel lay-out, Lohar, Co. Kerry.

[p. 11]

four feet high, with gates suitably placed. A door in the back of the dwelling house leads into a garden and orchard. In both these examples the front of the dwelling house is towards the yard, but in very many examples the back of the dwelling house is towards the yard, which is reached by a back door, while the front of the house faces a small garden with flowers and fruit trees through which a path leads to the front door. This is especially common in east Munster. Figure 3 shows the buildings on a smaller farm in the south-eastern part of Co. Galway. Here again we have a courtyard formed by buildings on three sides and a stone wall with a gate on the fourth, but the courtyard is divided into two parts by another wall which protects the portion in front of the dwelling house, which is a little garden with flowers and shrubs, from the animals which pass through the yard.

In the smaller farms of the north and west there usually are fewer buildings, and these are often joined together in one continuous row, as in the example shown in figure 4, on a small farm in Co. Tyrone, where dwelling house, stable, byre and a store form one long block of buildings. Here, the elements are clearly distinguished from each other—the byre and stable are more roughly built, with poorer roof timbers and thinner walls, than the dwelling house, while the store at the other end is narrower than the dwelling house and has a lower roof. Indeed most examples of this well-known and widespread type have the dwelling house clearly distinguishable from the outhouses; thus they must not be confused with the "long-house" of Wales, of which the distinctive feature is internal communication between the byre and the dwelling.[1] In contrast to this, there is no such internal communication in this Irish type, as each house, stable, byre, store and so on has its own entrance door, and very often the dwelling house and byre do not adjoin, but have a stable, store or dairy between them. But, as we shall see below, there is—or was until recently—a primitive form of the "long house" or combined dwelling house and cattle byre to be found in certain parts of Ireland.

Another farmyard form to be found in parts of the north and west, and especially in the hill districts and peninsulas of west Munster, is shown in fig. 5. Here the outhouses are built in one continuous row, and placed a short distance away from, and parallel to, the dwelling house; the space between the dwelling house and the outhouses serving not only as a yard but also as a passage between the public road and the farmer's fields; this yard or passage is, in many districts, called the "street".

In addition to these various farmyard types, there may be found farms in which the buildings are not arranged in any set plan, but are scattered about in a haphazard fashion, sometimes without any yard; these occur but rarely in fertile lowlands but are not infrequent in mountain and moorland localities, such as parts of the Kerry mountains.

It cannot be doubted that the system of having separate compartments or buildings for the different kinds of animals and stores is of considerable antiquity in Ireland. The law tract *Críth Gablach*, written about A.D. 700, states that the *bó-aire febhsa* (a certain grade of land owner) must have, in addition to his dwelling house and a share in a corn-mill, a kiln, a barn, a sheep-fold, a pigsty and a calf-pen.[2] Another ancient law tract[3] refers to five "houses", namely, dwelling house, cow-

[1] Peate, I. C. The Welsh House, 1940, chapter IV.
[2] Ancient Laws of Ireland, vol. IV, Dublin, 1879, 309.
[3] Ancient Laws of Ireland, vol. V, Dublin, 1901, 515.

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house, pigsty, calf-pen and sheepfold, and there are several other references in the ancient law tracts to cow-houses and pigstyes.

But, notwithstanding this old and varied farmyard tradition, it is also quite clear that there was, up to the beginning of the present century, a widespread custom of keeping the livestock, or part of it, in the dwelling house. There are very many references to this in descriptions of life and conditions in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Few, however, give any description of the internal arrangement of the houses, or the reason for the custom, and usually the accounts refer to small houses and a few poor animals. Some observers have mentioned the fear of wild beasts or robbers. "They are brought in by night for fear of thieves, the Irish using almost no other kind of theft, or else for fear of wolves."[1] Here the writer refers to the bawns attached to the castles, but of course the same risk existed for the small farmer also. Another traveller writes of a night spent in a house in west Co. Galway: "I had just compos'd myselfe to sleepe when I was strangely surprised to heare the cows and sheep all comeing into my bed chamber. I enquired the meaneing and was told it was to preserve them from the wolfe which everie night was rambling about for prey."[2] Another and much later writer describes a night spent in a small house in the Kerry mountains, near Kenmare: "In the house where I slept—as indeed in every house of the same character in the county—the whole stock of the family, consisting chiefly of cows and sheep, were locked in at night. Such was the extreme poverty of the people that they would not otherwise be safe. ... There was a slight partition between the room where my bed was and the kitchen where there were three cows, a man, his wife and four children."[3]

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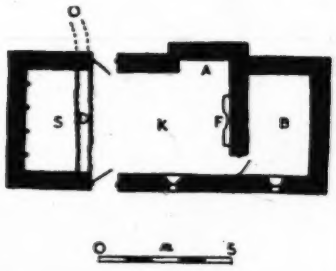

Fig. 10 House at Doolough, Co. Mayo. A, bed alcove; B, bedroom; D, drain; O, drain outlet; K, kitchen; F, fireplace; S, byre.

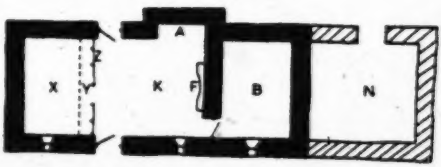

Fig. 11. House at Srahataggle, Co. Mayo. A, bed alcove; B, bedroom; K, kitchen; F, fireplace; X, former byre; Y, filled-in drain; Z, screen of canvas on wooden frame; N, present byre.

In many dwelling houses fowl, especially hatching hens, were kept in special coops or boxes, and it was quite usual to have weak or sickly young animals, or calves or lambs which for some reason were separated from their dams, in the kitchen where they had warmth and attention until strong enough to be put with the other animals. In many parts of Ireland the poorest people—

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[1] Fynes Morryson: Itinerary, 1617.

[2] Dunton, John: Letter no. 2 (1699), in MacLysaght, E.: Irish Life in the Seventeenth Century, 1939, 339.

[3] Doherty, M.: The Felon's Track.

231 351 361 those who had little or no land—commonly kept their animals in the dwelling house (which often had only one room) at night, a cow or two, or perhaps a donkey or pony, a pig or a goat and a few hens, the larger animals tied to pegs or rings set in the walls, the smaller in coops or boxes. In many houses, even large farmhouses, a special coop or perch was provided for the cock, whose crowing served to call the people of the house in the morning. A vivid description of the housing conditions of a remote and isolated community in the second half of the nineteenth century is given by Tomás Ó Crohan, writing about the Blasket Islands off the coast of Co. Kerry in the extreme south west: "There was a coop beside the partition with hens in it, and a hatching hen in an old pot nearby. At night a cow or two, a calf or two, an ass, two dogs tied to the wall or loose about the house. ... the two or three dogs would lie at the foot of the bed, the cow or two cows below them, tethered to the wall, the calf or two with the run of the kitchen and their muzzles in the fire. The ass was tied on the side of the house opposite the cows, and a cat with a couple of kittens in the fireplace niche ... And as well as all the other animals you might find a pet lamb or two about the house."[1] The custom of bringing the cattle into the dwelling house for milking during the period of the year when they are kept outdoors, as well as keeping them in the dwelling house during the winter period is recorded from Co. Kerry.[2] Indeed it is quite clear that, throughout the west and north of Ireland, the keeping of livestock in their small dwelling houses by the poorer people was quite a common practice up to the last years of the nineteenth century, and in houses from which the animals have long been ejected we may still see the rings or pegs to which they used to be tied.

342 351 361 231 There was, however, one type of house which was built and arranged as a dwelling for both people and animals, and which was still in use in the early years of the present century in parts of Connaught and Ulster, that is, in west Co. Galway, Co. Mayo, west Co. Sligo and west and north Co. Donegal. Figure 10 shows the plan of a typical specimen, at Doolough, Co. Mayo. This house is 12 m long and 5.5 m wide, built of stone and mortar and roofed with straw or grass thatch. It consists of two apartments, the smaller being a bedroom and the larger a kitchen-livingroom-cattle byre; the two apartments separated by the wall of the hearth. On one side of the hearth is a bed alcove. Two windows, one in each room and both on one side—the front—of the house, give light, and there are two doors, one in the front of the house and one in the back, placed directly opposite each other. On the farther side of these doors from the fire an open drain extends from side to side of the house; this drain is about 50 cm wide and 25 cm deep and is lined with flat stones. The space between this drain and the end wall of the house is the byre, and here, during the winter, three or four cows were kept tethered to the wall. The drain passed under the wall and led to the manure heap outside.

Figure 11 shows the manner in which many of these houses were changed during the last fifty years or so. A byre was built, attached to the house, as here, or quite apart from it. The drain was filled in, and a partition of wood, or, as here of canvas stretched on a wooden frame, erected to enclose the former byre which now became a bedroom. In many houses the partition was formed

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[1] Ó Crohan, Tomás: An tOileánach, chapter III.

[2] Campbell, Åke: "Irish Fields and Houses", Béaloideas, V, 68–70.

or partly formed by one or more large pieces of furniture, such as a dresser and a cupboard or press.

While recorded instances of this type are, as we have seen, confined to comparatively small areas of the west and north west, there is little doubt that identical or similar forms were once more widespread in Ulster, Connaught and parts of west Munster, where a strong folk-memory of the regular stalling of cattle in the lower end (the end farthest from the fire) of the kitchen still exists, and where one common house type has the two opposite doors and the lower end cut off by a partition of light material, as in the reconstructed house shown in figure 11. In Leinster and east Munster, in contrast to this, there is little or no tradition of cattle in the dwelling houses, and there is here a form of house in which the relative positions of the entrance door, hearth and hearth wall[1] would make the bringing of a large animal, such as a cow, into the house very difficult and in many cases quite impossible.

A recent article has shown that while the dispersed settlement pattern now dominates almost the whole of Ireland, there were formerly, and to a little extent still are, certain definite areas of village or group settlement type.[2] This, however, does not mean that a distinctive type of farmyard pattern is to be found in such groups or villages; on the contrary, the farmyard type in them is the same as that in the adjoining areas of dispersed settlement. Thus, the groups or villages of east Co. Galway and south Co. Kilkenny are formed of farmyards of the courtyard type, those of west Co. Kerry of the parallel type and those of west Co. Mayo and north and west Co. Donegal of the dwelling house-cum-byre type.

The middle of the twentieth century sees the Irish farmyard, in common with many other elements of rural life, in a stage of transition. On many farms new outhouses, especially new cattle-byres, are being built; in others new dwelling houses have been built, and the old dwelling houses refitted as byres, stores or stables, thus quite changing the aspect of the farmyard. The dwelling-cum-byre type of the north west has virtually disappeared, and in a few years will be no more than a memory; the extended type, in which dwelling house and outhouses form a long block of buildings is also disappearing.

[1] Ó Danachair, Caoimhín: "Hearth and Chimney in the Irish House", Béaloideas, xvi, 102, 104.

[2] Plates, P.: "L'Habitat Agricole Aggloméré en Irlande", Chronique Géographique des Pays Celtes, 1954, 112–24.

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STUDIES OF IRISH RURAL SETTLEMENT

JAMES H. JOHNSON

UNTIL recently it was generally thought that isolated farms, dispersed over the cultivated land (Fig. 1), formed a settlement pattern of great antiquity in Ireland. Without investigating the matter deeply, academic geographers explained this pattern in several ways. Some saw it as a product of the pastoral emphasis of Irish agriculture, which necessitated a close relationship between a farmer's residence and his fields.[1] Others, especially Meitzen, regarded the dispersed farms as a direct result of the Celtic heritage of the country.[2] And although professional geographers preferred a cultural explanation, school textbooks tended to seize on an environmental factor, seeing dispersed settlement as a product of the moist Irish climate, which required no concentration on wet-point sites and presumably allowed the cultural factors free play.[3]

Contemporary Studies

Work by modern geographers on the critical study of Irish rural settlement began in County Donegal. Here E. E. Evans[4] showed that, in parts of the county at least, the single isolated farm is a relatively recent form of settlement, which dates from the nineteenth century rather than survives from any great antiquity. Modern dispersed settlement in Donegal was in fact preceded by "clachans"—clusters of farm dwellings and their associated outbuildings, usually grouped without any formal plan and in the early nineteenth century often consisting of as many as 30–40 houses. Although these clachans normally lacked both inn and church, communal life and the exchange of services were characteristic, and as a rule their inhabitants were related by blood.

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[1] A. Demangeon: La géographie de l'habitat rural (International Geographical Congress, London and Cambridge, 1928: Report of the Commission on Types of Rural Settlement, pp. 41–80), p. 59.

[2] August Meitzen: Siedelung und Agrarwesen der Westgermanen und Ostgermanen, der Kelten, Römer, Finnen und Slawen (3 vols. and atlas, Berlin, 1895), Vol. 1, pp. 174–182.

[3] The advantage of universal water supplies in Ireland is more apparent than real. In parts of County Fermanagh, for example, farmers must carry drinking water hundreds of yards to their dispersed farms (cf. J. M. Mogey: Rural Life in Northern Ireland [Oxford, 1947], pp. 35–36), when nucleation around the most satisfactory supply would seem to be a logical arrangement. Personal observation suggests that this is a not uncommon situation on many Irish farms.

[4] Some Survivals of the Irish Openfield System, *Geography*, Vol. 24, 1939, pp. 24–36; Donegal Survivals, *Antiquity*, Vol. 13, 1939, pp. 207–222.

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FIG. 1—Panoramic view of dispersed farmsteads near Carrnure, County Armagh, looking west along the drumlin belt of north Ireland. (Photograph by J. K. St. Joseph, from Cambridge University Collection. British Crown Copyright reserved.)

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McCourt[5] has been able to map the distribution of relicts of clachan settlement as they were to be found in the 1830's. He has shown that this was a widespread form of settlement in Ireland at the end of the eighteenth century, and that it did not disappear in the remoter parts of the country until late in the nineteenth.[6] Indeed, occasional clachans that are still actively functioning can be found today on the Atlantic seaboard (Figs. 2 and 3[7]).

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Associated with clachan settlement was a form of open-field cultivation, comparable to the Scottish infield-outfield system and generally known in

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[5] D. McCourt: The Rundale System in Ireland: A Study of Its Geographical Distribution and Social Relations (Thesis, Ph.D., Queen's University, Belfast, 1950).

[6] D. McCourt: Traditions of Rundale in and around the Sperrin Mountains, *Ulster Journ. of Archaeol.*, Ser. 3, Vol. 16, 1953, pp. 69–84; *idem*: The Rundale System in Donegal: Its Distribution and Decline, *Journ. County Donegal Hist. Soc.*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1955, pp. 47–60.

[7] The author thanks Captain C. Ó Danachair of the Irish Folklore Commission for drawing his attention to the photograph presented as Figure 3.

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Ireland as "rundale" or "runrig."[8] Under rundale the land surrounding a settlement was worked as a joint farm, with individual plots and strips scattered through the arable land, some on the constantly tilled infield and some on shifting outfield patches reclaimed periodically from the waste.[9] By the early nineteenth century this form of agriculture had become extremely complicated, as a result of the rapidly increasing population and of the Irish practice of subdividing a restricted amount of arable land among all the male heirs of the household. In modern surviving examples the clachan and cultivation in rundale are closely interrelated, and it is generally assumed that they do not function independently. But a complication to this interpretation has emerged in a small area of County Down that has been examined by R. H. Buchanan[10] within the limits set by the available manuscript material. Here a set of estate maps shows clachans apparently developed in association with compact holdings. Although this work, which refers to a small area and uses a narrow range of information, may not weaken the great body of evidence that suggests a direct relationship between rundale agriculture and clachan settlement, at least it indicates that the relationship needs to be carefully appraised in each individual case.

Two Nineteenth-Century Investigators

Although changes in the pattern of Irish rural settlement have only recently been uncovered by research, the periodic reports of the various Royal Commissions concerned with nineteenth-century Ireland make it clear that the inhabitants of the country were not unaware of the changes taking place around them.[11] Hence it is not surprising that at least two nineteenth-century scholars, Frederic Seebohm and August Meitzen, knew of clachan settlement.

Seebohm's attention was focused on the manorial and tribal systems and on the open-field system of cultivation.[12] It was this latter interest in particular

[8] D. McCourt: Infield and Outfield in Ireland, *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, Ser. 2, Vol. 7, 1954–1955, pp. 369–376.

[9] Flatrès believes that the outfield was not widely found in Ireland but was a late introduction, brought in the early seventeenth century by Scottish settlers (Pierre Flatrès: Géographie rurale de quatre contrées celtiques—Irlande, Galles, Cornwall & Man [Rennes, 1957]). No attempt has been made here to evaluate Flatrès' ambitious study, of particular interest, however, is his map of the modern field systems of Ireland (Fig. 1) [Reviewed in this number of the *Geographical Review*, p. 599.—Edit. Note.]

[10] The author is grateful to Mr. Buchanan for this information in advance of its publication.

[11] In particular see the evidence presented to the Devon Commission (Report from Her Majesty's Commissioners of Inquiry [Lord Devon, Chairman] into . . . the Occupation of Land in Ireland [6 parts (in 3 vols.), London, 1845; British Parliamentary Papers 1845, XIX-XXIII]).

[12] Frederic Seebohm: The English Village Community, Examined in Its Relations to the Manorial and Tribal Systems and to the Common or Open Field System of Husbandry (2nd edit., London, 1883).

[Text continues on p. 558]

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Fig. 2—Ballyhillin, a present-day clachan near Malin Head, County Donegal.

Fig. 3—Kiltullagh, a hamlet of a form common in County Galway. The regularity in the arrangement of the houses is possibly the result of the activity of a former landlord, though it is noticeable that the houses are not perfectly oriented to the road. (Photograph from Irish Press.)

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114 311 361 that led him to pay some attention to the arrangement of settlement on the land. At first sight he does not seem to have been aware of the existence of clachans in Ireland, since he states that under the tribal system homesteads "were scattered over the country and not grouped together in villages and towns," and he seems to suggest that the dispersed settlement of nineteenth-century Ireland was a product of this heritage.[13] But elsewhere in the same work he points out that homesteads were in fact grouped in "arithmetical clusters" which were "the natural method by which the frequent redistributions of the land were made easy; while the runrig form of open-field system was the natural mode of conducting a cooperative and shifting agriculture"[14] —a recognizable description of settlement in clachans. This apparent contradiction must have been produced merely by the lack of a definition of what is meant by the term "village." A clachan was just a group of farm buildings, usually without any other function and without any plan, and hence it would not have appeared "village-like" to an Englishman's eyes, though its total population could have approached that of a village in lowland Britain. Unfortunately, Seebohm's conclusions on Irish settlement cannot be accepted at their face value. Although the form of settlement he describes may have been found in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—the period from which he drew his information—it does not follow that these conditions represented the form of settlement associated with the original tribal system, as he suggests. However, at least he was aware that the clachan existed in early-nineteenth-century Ireland.

To geographers Meitzen's work is perhaps better known.[15] His assertion that settlement in isolated farms (*Einzelhöfe*) could be traced back to the mode of a Celtic ethnic group has been criticized on the broad European evidence, but in spite of this he was not unaware of the presence of clachans in Ireland. In the atlas that forms part of his great work (perhaps its most valuable part for modern geographers) several plates derived from nineteenth-century Ordnance Survey maps illustrate clachans and the open fields associated with them.[16] Although he drew much of his information from Seebohm, Meitzen could not accept the theory that clachans originated in Celtic or pre-Celtic time; however, his alternative explanations are unconvincing. It is hard to believe that this settlement form was introduced into Scotland by Scandinavian influence or that in Ireland it was transitional between pastoral

[13] *Ibid.*, pp. 223–244.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 230.
[15] Meitzen, *op. cit.* [see footnote 2 above].
[16] *Ibid.*, Atlas to Vol. 3, maps 23 and 25–27.

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and arable use of land.[17] Further, Meitzen does not seem to have been aware of the widespread distribution of the clachan and its associated field system. In fairness, however, it should be pointed out that Meitzen was not entirely wrong. Recent work suggests that Celtic freemen in Ireland lived in dispersed farmsteads (known to archeologists as "raths"),[18] though this does not establish that modern dispersed settlement was directly derived from such a heritage, particularly in view of the unsettled history of Ireland during the intervening period.

A Problem in Origins

Moreover, the two forms of settlement—*Einzelhöfe* and clachans—are not necessarily incompatible. Both McCourt and Evans have commented on the way in which clachans wax and wane,[19] largely because of fluctuations in population numbers. Indeed, McCourt cites at least one example from County Antrim in which an individual farm grew into a clachan between 1782 and 1832, and two of the clachans Evans studied in Donegal dissolved into isolated farms sometime between 1834 and 1902.[20]

The problem here seems to be one of origin. Did the clachan bring the infield-outfield system with it, or were the two separate at this earliest stage? If they were separate, it would suggest that their modern survival together on the Atlantic fringe of Ireland may be the result of the independent preservation of ancient practices in a difficult region. For that matter, was the clachan introduced? Examples have already been given of the growth of nucleated settlements from dispersed farmsteads, often in a very short time, and in view of the clachan's lack of plan this manner of origin seems entirely reasonable.

On the other hand, merely to say that the settlement pattern and the field system grew out of the subdivision of a larger enclosed farm is to oversimplify the problem. Meitzen postulated a Celtic people with a tradition of compact farms; but if subdivision took place, surely it would have been a break with that tradition to produce small farms with scattered strips rather

[17] *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp. 207–218.

[18] V. B. Proudfoot: The People of the Forths, *Ulster Folklife*, Vol. 1, 1955, pp. 19–26. See also his "Settlement and Economy in Co. Down from the Late Bronze Age to the Anglo-Norman Invasion" (Thesis, Ph.D., Queen's University, Belfast, 1957).

[19] McCourt, Infield and Outfield in Ireland [see footnote 8 above], p. 376; Evans, Some Survivals of the Irish Openfield System [see footnote 4 above], p. 28.

[20] McCourt, The Rundale System in Ireland [see footnote 5 above], diagram 27; Evans, Some Survivals of the Irish Openfield System [see footnote 4 above], p. 29; E. E. Evans: The Ecology of Peasant Life in Western Europe, *in* Man's Role in Changing the Face of the Earth, edited by W. L. Thomas, Jr. (Chicago, 1956), pp. 217–239, reference on p. 231.

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than small compact holdings. A further indication that there may have been a fundamental distinction between the systems which is not apparent at first sight lies in the fact that, wherever the historical record goes back continuously into the eighteenth and seventeenth centuries, both settlement forms are found to have existed side by side in the same areas and over the whole period.[21] No case is yet known in which an area with nothing but dispersed farms was converted into an area where clachans were completely dominant. Hence, drawing an analogy from Wales, where G. R. J. Jones[22] has carefully examined more plentiful medieval documents than have survived in Ireland, Evans has been led to suggest that the dispersed Iron Age farms (the "raths" referred to above) were the homes of freemen; and bondmen, the descendants of pre-Celtic inhabitants, lived in clachans. Later, in historical time, both groups fell under the control of landlords, but remnants of the former situation survived in the settlement pattern.[23] Some confirmation of this theory has come from Proudfoot's work in County Down, where he has been able to show that raths were not the only form of settlement during the Dark Ages; there were also groups of farms without an enclosing bank, which could be dated to the same period.[24] Such an interpretation regards clachan settlement as being of great antiquity, and indeed it is hard to believe that the cooperative kinship unit (which life in a clachan implies) is other than of considerable age. Further, it suggests that the fundamental antithesis was between systems of landholding, rather than between settlement patterns.

The infield-outfield system also seems to have been an early introduction. It could be suggested, of course, that the system represented an adaptation of the medieval three-field system to the small amount of good arable land available in many parts of Ireland. Medieval agriculture on an English pattern had been introduced into southeastern Ireland by the Normans; and a medieval origin has been suggested for some villages in Wexford, formed of groups of strip farms, which were still functioning in the nineteenth century.[25] But even if this can be firmly established, the Norman influence on agriculture was limited to the southeastern part of the country. In any case, the modern

[21] McCourt, Infield and Outfield in Ireland [see footnote 8 above], p. 376.

[22] G. R. J. Jones: Some Medieval Rural Settlements in North Wales, *Inst. of British Geogrs. Publ. No. 19: Trans. and Papers 1953*, London, 1954, pp. 51–72.

[23] Evans, The Ecology of Peasant Life in Western Europe [see footnote 20 above], p. 231. Earlier, Duignan had tentatively suggested a similar idea but did not relate it to the development of settlement patterns (M. Duignan: Irish Agriculture in Early Historic Times, *Journ. Royal Soc. of Antiquaries of Ireland*, Vol. 74, 1944, pp. 124–145; reference on p. 129).

[24] Proudfoot, Settlement and Economy in Co. Down [see footnote 18 above].

[25] J. Otway-Ruthven: The Origin of Anglo-Irish Agriculture in the Middle Ages, *Journ. Royal Soc. of Antiquaries of Ireland*, Vol. 81, 1951, pp. 1–13; reference on p. 6.

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survivals of the infield-outfield system in the remoter parts of Ireland would seem to suggest that it dates from a time much earlier than that of the Norman invasion.

Lines of Investigation

These questions and theories widen the field for speculation, but it is difficult to see where to turn for further information, largely because of the meager documentary evidence that survives in Ireland from periods earlier than the eighteenth century. Admittedly, relevant material may be discovered among estate papers, but there are three other lines that might be followed with profit.

One possible approach, field investigation, is illustrated by a project now under way, in which archeological techniques are being used to excavate a clachan in County Down, inhabited until the late nineteenth century. The primary aim is to discover how this particular clachan originated. Did it grow out of a single farm, and, if so, at what date? Two seasons' work has now been completed without conclusive answers to these questions, though some details have been added to the local economic history of County Down.[26] At least it has been shown that a clachan settlement stood on this site about 1780 and that the site had been occupied from sometime near the end of the fifteenth century, if not earlier. Buildings were found underlying the nineteenth-century structures. The fact that some of these remains appear to date from a time before the immigration of Scottish and English settlers into the area in the early seventeenth century should prove important in the study of Irish house types, since the lack of evidence on the development of settlement patterns extends also to the history of individual farm buildings.[27]

Whether this particular excavation will yield further information about

[26] J. H. Johnson, V. B. Proudfoot, and R. H. Buchanan: Excavations at Minerstown, Co. Down: Preliminary Report on Work Completed in 1956, *Ulster Journ. of Archaeol.*, Ser. 3, Vol. 21, 1958. (In press.)

[27] Pioneer work on surviving house types was carried out by A. Campbell (Irish Fields and Houses: A Study of Rural Culture, *Béaloideas*, Vol. 5, 1935, pp. 57–74; Notes on the Irish House, *Folklife*, Vol. 1, 1937, pp. 207–234, and Vol. 2, 1938, pp. 173–196). This has been developed in a series of local studies so that a comprehensive account of the surviving forms of Irish traditional building is becoming increasingly possible. The best and most recent general account is E. E. Evans' "Irish Folk Ways" (London, 1957, with an extensive bibliography), Chapters 4 and 5. Several important articles on house types and related topics have appeared recently; for example, C. Ó Danachair: Irish Farmyard Types, *Arctica: Studia Ethnographia Upsaliensis No. 11*, 1956, pp. 6–15; A. T. Lucas: Wattle and Straw-Mat Doors in Ireland, *ibid.*, pp. 16–35; C. Ó Danachair: Stand und Aufgaben der Hausforschung in Irland, *Bericht über die Arbeitstagung des Arbeitskreises für Deutsche Hausforschung*, Schleswig, 1955, pp. 29–50; R. H. Buchanan: Thatch and Thatching in North-East Ireland, *Gwerin*, Vol. 1, 1956–1957, pp. 123–142; and C. Ó Danachair: The Bed Out-Shot in Ireland, *Folklife*, Vols. 19–20, 1955–1956, pp. 26–31.

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settlement patterns is somewhat doubtful. There is a reasonable chance of eventual discovery of the origin of settlement on this site, but from the beginning it was realized that only by good fortune would the relation of the clachan to other settlement forms, in particular the Irish raths, be uncovered. However, since relatively little of a substantive nature is known about Irish peasant life until as late as the end of the eighteenth century, any information on the material culture of the inhabitants of this site will be of value. There does not seem to be great hope of uncovering any field systems that may have surrounded the settlement, but similar work elsewhere might be more fortunate.

Place-name evidence provides a second, if somewhat tentative, line of investigation. For instance, J. B. Arthurs has suggested that *baile* (bally), the Gaelic word for home place or townland, may be of pre-Goidelic origin, and that where "ballys" are numerous, indigenous people had been left mainly undisturbed by the Goidelic expansion.[28] If this can be firmly established, it will immediately suggest a parallel with the possible dual system of landholding previously mentioned, particularly since the names of many surviving clachans contain the element "bally." Certainly there is need for further research on this topic.

Aerial photography offers a third line. Irish archeologists have long been aware of its importance[29] and have illustrated excavation reports with photographs taken from the air; but, except locally, this method has not yet been employed systematically in the study of Irish rural settlement. If suitable photographs were available, it is likely that they would illuminate the history of fields and farms in Ireland. At the least a detailed study of the available air photographs would guide further field work on the ground.

Disappearance of the Old System

Such methods of investigation can only hope to produce a few clues in what must be an exercise in detection; and, in a sense, it is some relief to find that the factors involved in the final disappearance of the infield-outfield system and its associated settlement pattern are somewhat clearer than the earlier history of these features. The regional details, however, still remain obscure, since the enclosure of the open fields in Ireland required no parlia-

[28] Quoted in Evans, Irish Folk Ways [see preceding footnote], p. 27.

[29] D. A. Chart: Air-Photography in Northern Ireland. *Antiquity*, Vol. 4. 1930, pp. 453–459; J. Raftery: Air-Photography and Archaeology. *Journ. Royal Soc. of Antiquaries of Ireland*, Vol. 74. 1944, pp. 119–123. Proudfoot (Settlement and Economy in Co. Down [see footnote 18 above]) used air photographs in his study of County Down, as did the government-sponsored archeological survey of the same county.

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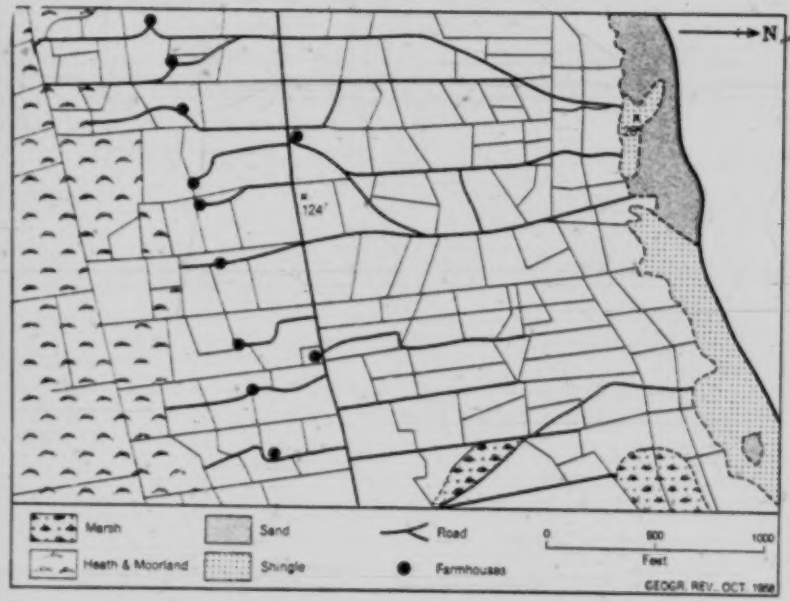

FIG. 4—"Striped" farms and fields in County Kerry. (Based on the Ordnance Survey, by permission of the Minister of Finance, Republic of Ireland.)

mentary authorization. Although it is rarely possible to obtain information on the methods and precise date of consolidation, the destruction of the system can be explained, in broad terms, by its growing inefficiency and by the dissemination of new agricultural techniques.

Some of the unsatisfactory aspects of rundale agriculture sprang from the steady growth of the population of Ireland, which continued from sometime in the middle of the eighteenth century until the Great Famine of 1845–1847.[30] This increase led to a constant encroachment on various uncultivated areas, a process in which the general adoption of the potato as a subsistence crop played a major part.[31] But the "waste" lands brought under cultivation had not been completely unused, since often they were grazed by livestock under a well-developed transhumance.[32] This seasonal movement was important to the rural economy, because efficient rundale farming required that the animals be removed from the unfenced cultivated strips during the growing

[30] K. H. Connell: The Population of Ireland, 1750–1845 (Oxford, 1950).
[31] *Idem*: The Colonization of Waste Land in Ireland, 1780–1845. *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, Ser. 2, Vol. 3, 1950–1951, pp. 44–71.
[32] J. M. Graham: Transhumance in Ireland, *The Advancement of Sci.*, Vol. 10, 1953–1954, pp. 74–79.

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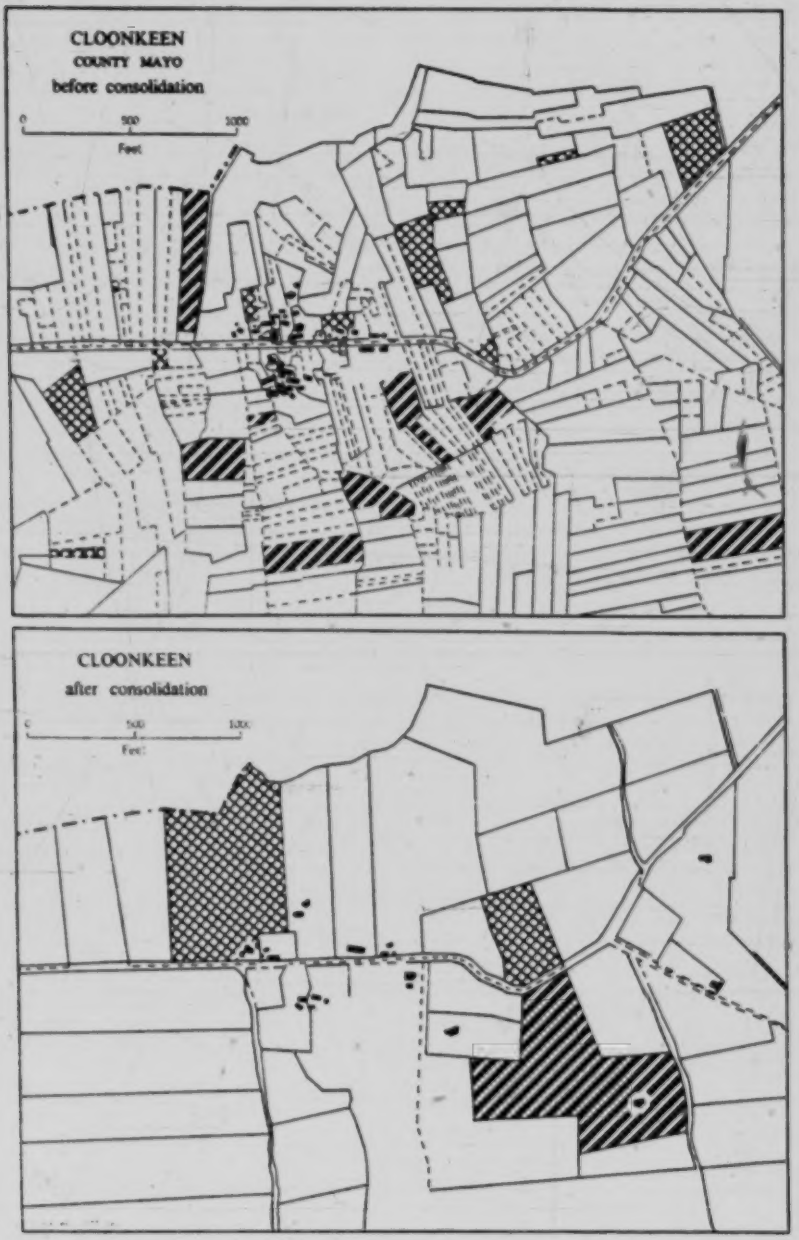

FIG. 5—Cloonkeen, County Mayo, before and after consolidation. The two different shadings (crosshatch and diagonal ruling) represent land held by two typical farmers before and after the consolidation carried out in 1909 by the Congested Districts Board. (Based on information kindly provided by the Irish Land Commission and reproduced by permission.)

7:Johnson K-4 (no date) 1958
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season; and the end of transhumance made the working of the system more difficult. Similarly, the increase of population led to a remarkable growth in the size of many clachans, which often made life in them increasingly inconvenient. Squabbles over rights of way and other petty affairs were common, and there was a growing awareness that the old methods of farming were becoming unsatisfactory. The introduction of new crops and rotations gave the *coup de grâce* to the efficiency of the system; for they were difficult to integrate into it, and therefore agricultural improvement was retarded.

The impetus behind the changes, however, usually did not come from the farmers themselves but from their landlords. Indeed, it seems possible that peasant resistance to the destruction of rundale was a considerable factor in nineteenth-century opposition to landlordism.[33] Often landlords, intent on improving their estates, would put whole areas of land into the melting pot, consolidating holdings and sometimes evicting the surplus population. Frequently the new holdings were arranged up and down the slope of the land, an arrangement that has resulted in the characteristic striped appearance of much of the modern Irish landscape. Although long, narrow strips were probably not the best possible farm shape (Fig. 4), they represented a compromise between the traditional system of allocating each farmer a share of every quality of land and the landlords' demands for greater efficiency. At the same time the old clachan groups were broken up and new farmhouses were built, each within its own land. In such a way most of the better agricultural land was converted, but at the end of the nineteenth century various areas, particularly in the west of Ireland, still remained under the old system or some modification of it. This hard core has now been largely eliminated by government action. First the British government attempted a general improvement of living conditions in western Ireland by means of the Congested Districts Board, whose work included the reorganization of agricultural holdings (Fig. 5);[34] after 1922 and the establishment of the Irish Free State the task was taken over by the Irish Land Commission.[35]

In some areas, however, the disappearance of clachan settlement was part of a natural process in the late nineteenth century. The population of Ireland started to decrease after the Great Famine of the 1840's, and even in areas where there had been little rearrangement of holdings some clachans became

[33] See, for example, the Devon Commission Report [see footnote 11 above], Part 1, Appendix 14, p. 58.

[34] T. W. Freeman: The Congested Districts of Western Ireland, *Geogr. Rev.*, Vol. 33, 1943, pp. 1–14.

[35] On this aspect of the Land Commission's work see "The Consolidation of Fragmented Agricultural Holdings" (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Washington, 1950), Chapter 3, "Relief of Rural Congestion in Ireland."

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uninhabited and in others only a single family remained. In these areas, too, partial consolidation was carried out by adding the fields of an emigrating farmer to those of some neighbor or relative who remained at home. The decrease in population had a more general influence as well: throughout Ireland it prevented former conditions from reasserting themselves. Everywhere there was diminished pressure on the land, and the growth of larger farms rather than renewed subdivision.

There are still gaps, then, in the story of Irish rural settlement. Until documentary and field evidence slowly yields the missing chapters, the past will remain a subject for speculation rather than for confident explanation. The rural systems of previous centuries are now disappearing, but the surviving remains may hold clues to former conditions, and their interpretation remains a continuing challenge.

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
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from the narrow valley lands at Doolin in the extreme north-west of County Clare. I was on my way to my first stay in an Irish west-country farm community. My road, no wider than a bridle-path, led up a sharp escarpment out of the tiny valley which empties its stony river into the Atlantic, not three miles away from the southernmost island of Aran. Once the top of the rim is reached the mountainside flattens out into a green and gently sloping table-land. Standing there one can see the whaleback rocks that are the Aran Islands and the masses of Mount Elva on the southern shore of Galway Bay. Far beyond in Connemara, one can catch the glint of the Twelve Pins, if the day is 'hard' and sunny. Off to the left, the table-land breaks off abruptly three hundred feet downward into the Atlantic, for the famed Cliffs of Moher are here, reminders of an Irish mountain that the sea has shorn off clean.

The community toward which I was making my way lies along the table-land between mountain-top of bracken and black bog and the cliffs. It keeps up the old tradition. It calls itself Luogh, and its language, at least that of the old people, is Irish, but the young people are forgetting the old tongue. English is the more common speech today, even here. Yet Mr. Delargy, the editor of the *Irish Folklore Journal*, has collected a large number of stories, songs and traditional tales and sayings here, some of them going back to the saga cycles.

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Luogh is remote. It is nearly half a day's tramp along the roads from its market town, Ennistymon. Even Ennistymon is no metropolis. It is a sprawling village of 1200 people. Neither bus nor train runs between the two.

But Luogh is not entirely isolated by this remoteness. It does not entirely escape modernity. Pleasure-bent motorists from the cities drive through along the cliffs. One can see Atlantic liners standing-to just outside Galway Bay. Many of Luogh's farms have a horse-drawn mowing machine, out of an English steel works, and some of the houses own a mechanical cream separator, even though next door a wooden hand churn is still in use which looks no different from those found deep in the bogs.

But modern tools do not make the life of Luogh. They ease it perhaps, and work a slow effect. But in a short stay one cannot see that change. One's attention turns to the life into which these few strays of modernity find their way.

For Luogh is like many another community of small farms over Clare and southern and western Ireland. Some lie closer to urban centres, some are even more remote. Many are better off; some few are poorer. Some have kept the Irish language better; others have abandoned it altogether for the brogue. But they all have the 'sweet *blas*' of Gaelic still on their tongues and speak an idiom embedded in their common folk life.

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181 I did not know this as I came to Luogh. But I was to learn it soon in Luogh and in other communities in County Clare. Later I was to find it so even more widely; in newspapers, in novels, in court records, in statistical reports, in political bombasts. It was a way of life with its own laws which included Luogh and the Blaskets and even the fertile small farms of rich Tipperary.

114 When I first came to Luogh I knew only that in this remote little community of small farmers I should find something of the old tradition still alive. My learning was a piecemeal process — a sketching out of wider and wider ramifications of the observations which came my way.

It is this process to which I wish to devote the remainder of this lecture. It is a process in which you can follow me. Perhaps better than anything else it will prepare us for an anthropological study of Irish rural life.

Let me illustrate this process with two examples. I shall call them the 'west room' and the 'old man's curse'. Both of them are related to old custom and both will serve to show the process by which one lays bare the rural life of which old custom is a part.

592 361 The house to which my road into Luogh finally led was a typical small farmer's cottage. It was one of twenty-six in Luogh. It was the seat of a small farm of sixteen acres (with eight more in the valley), 'the place of four cows and a horse', as the country-

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people describe it. Much of it was rough, wet mountain land, but the phrase implies that it was good enough at least to provide grass for animals. All farms are described in this way, for by the cows and the small 'gardens' of potatoes, cabbage, oats and turnips, the small farmers live. We shall have more to say of agriculture in another context; I think the explanation is sufficient here.

My host's house in Luogh, as I have said, was like the others. It was a bit 'stronger', that is, neater, better built and kept, than many of the others, but it was like the others in all essentials. It was a white-washed stone cottage, rectangular, roofed with slate (though it was only a few years ago that they gave up thatch). Its long sides faced roughly north and south, each with a door opening directly out into the yards. In the gable of the roof was a loft for sleeping; otherwise it was confined to a single story. The central room, the largest by far, was the kitchen. There the family passed their lives and prepared and ate the food cooked on the hearth. The hearth was an open turf fire, built in a chimney large enough to have two hobs or seats deep within on either side. It had, too, an iron hook which swung the cooking-pots out into the room from off the fire.

Behind this hearth was another room. It was called, for its position in the house, the 'west room'. This is the 'west room' which is to provide my first example.

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stand these controls is to reach at least one nucleus of the countryman's way of life.

In County Clare, as in all rural Ireland, the small farmer's family lives upon the holding it works. As a rule, the farmhouse is an isolated building standing upon its own ground and forming an integral part of the holding. This is the familiar type of farm we know; Meizen calls it the *Einzelhof*. There are many other types of settlement in Ireland: villages whose fields lie round about in somewhat the fashion of the Russian *mir*; striping fields; and the crazy-quilt pattern of 'rundale'; but the *Einzelhof* has won out historically. Anyway, whatever the type of holding, the farm family spends its entire life upon it: sleeping, eating, giving birth and dying there, and sallying forth every day for work. Whether or not there is a topographic identity between house and land, there is a social one. The countryside knows the farm as a unit. The farm shares the name of the family working it. It is inalienably associated with them.

Since cattle play so large a part in rural economy, it is natural that this unit should be known and judged as 'the place of so many cows'. For in Clare the land is valued for its pasture. It is divided into 'field' for grazing, and 'meadow' where the grass is cut for hay, and 'garden', the small tillage plot. In mountain areas, it may also include rough mountain grazing, called 'moun-

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311 tain', and wherever possible, it includes a 'bit of
231 bog' for 'turf' for the year's fuel. When a small
592 farmer tells you he 'has the place of four cows' he sums up this sort of farm, judging it for its ability to support himself and his family in the country manner and to give pasture to four milch cows. In the phrase he epitomizes rural economy.

592 Ordinarily the house opens directly into the
361 'haggard', as the farmyard is called. There in the haggard are the cabins in which cattle are housed and the various sheds and stalls, often built into the masonry of the house itself. In them, farm machines, tools and carts are kept and crops and seed are stored. Hens and other poultry roam at will through the haggard and are housed there, and in one of the sheds pig or pigs find their quarters. The winter's supply of fodder stands there in the form of the great hayrick. The straw-covered pit of turnips and mangels, not far away, will serve for men and cattle; and the turf-rick is near at hand. As for the house itself we have already looked inside, in our search for the 'west room'.

592 The family with which this unit is associated centres its activity round house and haggard. Even for the men, whose work lies primarily in field, garden and meadow, work centres round the house for a good part of the year. If I give you a sketch of this activity as my co-workers and I saw it day after day in several rural communities in Clare, I hope to throw its general features into relief.

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In such a clique, the student of social behaviour can see fairly closely the interplay of social dispositions and individual character. Concrete cases have a way of disposing of controversies by transporting the issue to a new plane. In the study of such a case as this, as we shall see, the old question whether the individual affects the society or the society moulds the individual—a long-standing scholastic debate among sociologists—can be pushed into well-merited oblivion. For the answer is that both interpretations are correct; and that neither is at all penetrating. The issue is free to move to a new plane: the relations between behaviours and the patterning of sentiment and conduct.

In the old men's clique of Rynamona we have our concrete instance. Similar old men's gatherings from any other of the rural communities my colleagues and I knew would serve as well. They are remarkably similar even to duplicating nicknames. For as our informant explains: "That is the way it always was and that is the way it always will be". A social system endures in past and future and exists in space, its changes are changes of this spatial and temporal world, its constancies are likewise bound to earth and time.

Rynamona, then, shall be our present instant in time and space. Rynamona is a medium-sized townland in the limestone country of North Clare. It is like many another of the 'good land'

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361 of rough limestone outcrops that stretch back from the sea into the glaciated lake-stream North Clare country. To reach Rynamona is no easy 361 task, even for horse and car. The main road north 491 out of Corofin to Kilfenora passes through Killinaboy, where twelve houses, a school, a chapel and a post-office mark an ancient settlement. Only a ruined ninth-century church and graveyard attest to its great antiquity.

There, beside the graveyard, a side-road leads off toward Glanquin mountain, and the hills of Burren beyond. One follows this road along through ragged upland for a mile and a half. 361 This is Killinaboy Commons, and its many small fields, laboriously cleared of stones, bear witness to its having been a refuge of the evicted. The upland is not high. It merely gives rise enough to start a half-mile of gentle slope into a basin whose bottom is filled with a little lake. Rynamona lies round the lake, at the end of a rough borheen.

The fields here are cleared, too, and cut up between with limestone ridges. Yet the grass grows richly among the crags, and the farmers are a fairly prosperous lot.

Eight of their houses stand in an irregular cluster on the lake shore. This is 'Rynamona village'. Five others are scattered through the fields and across the lake. These households, with a few more a little farther off, make up the community.

The farms are all small; they are of the kind we

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have met in Luogh. None has ten cows, and only one has a single beast. Except for the eight houses huddled in the village, fields and meadows stretch away from the haggard wall. In the case of the villagers, the fields are scattered about and behind the haggards in irregular patterns. Besides these home fields, most of Rynamona has two or three acres in additions carved out for them by the Land Commission on an estate about two miles off.

Rynamona is a closely knit community. Reduplicated bonds of kinship unite all the households. "We are all related one way or another", they say. 'Cooring' is the usual form of co-operation. The village holds itself responsible amid grumbles for maintaining the borheen which leads out to the outside world of the towns. Nowadays, the County Council pays the sons who break stones and lay them in the winter months, but the village still assigns a bit of the road to each householder. Small matter if the borheen is bad, for a well-trod maze of paths criss-crosses the fields in all directions.

Old man O'Donoghue's house, the third in the village, is the 'old men's house'. Mrs. Ruin, a neighbour, will tell you what the old man means to the men of the village. "The old man is getting weaker and when he is gone out of it the village won't be the same. He will be the greatest loss. It is round his fireplace the men gather. Where will they go when he dies?"

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V

Shops, Pubs and Fairs

369 In many ways the town is an alien world, even a hostile one, to the countryman. He feels its scorn of his rusticity and distrusts its urbane way. Yet the town has an attraction for him no less strong in rural Ireland than elsewhere in the world. It weans away his sons and daughters. It brings him the breath of the outer world. After all, metropolis is a relative term. Metropolitan prestige is an infinite gradation in which the smallest hamlet may have a share with Megalopolis. Metropolitan prejudice is no less capable of minute division, and country towns engender little cockneys as quickly as might London produce a great one. They, too, would feel with Dr. Johnson that the fairest prospect in all Scotland was the road to London Town.

For if Megalopolis is the crossroads of the world, the country town is no less so. The difference is merely one of scale. Broadway, Piccadilly, and the Place de l'Opéra have counterparts in any country town.

361 In Ireland the parallel is more apt than one might credit at first thought. Irish towns have always been little more than crossroad centres.

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They are market-towns and administrative seats. 361
Their economics is that of distribution, not production. The industrial revolution has passed southern Ireland by. The shop, the pub, the fair bring the towns their life-blood and link them to their hinterlands and to the outside world. Many of them still collect market tolls on rural produce, as if they still had a ring of stone-wall fortification about them. Many of them have no fair green but throw open all their streets to shouting, bargaining men and milling cattle, on the day of the fair, surrendering themselves entirely to the countryside upon which they live.

One still approaches many of them today as one approached them in the sixteenth century, [491]
although now perhaps an automobile road breaks
a new entrance into them or the railroad halts a [496]
jaunting car's distance away. The roads that radiate inward toward the heart of the town are still lined with labourers' and artisans' thatched cottages long before one reaches the town itself. As one proceeds along them, the cottages give way to shops and public houses which rise higher and more stately as one nears the centre, in the market-place or in the central square. There, quite often, that emporium of the most valuable commodity of all—the local bank—now dominates the scene.

Between the shop-fronts, back lanes lead off to the recesses in which the labourers live; and, off by

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361 themselves in a proud segregation, stand the more pretentious houses of a residential area, and the great grey buildings in which local government and justice are housed. But the centre remains the point at which the shop-lined streets that lead from deep within the countryside converge. The life of the country and that of the town meet and mingle along these converging lines.

175 361 That mingling represents the latest stage of an age-old struggle in which the countryside has won out at last. It has been a conquest of assimilation, like the victories of Chinese life over the barbarian invader. The town in Irish history was originally, and often long remained, a foreign growth. In the great age of Celtic civilization, the monastery and the royal seat centred Irish life. Later the Celto-Norman castle scorned an urban fortress wall. The town was first a Danish importation; only Galway, of Irish cities, was not a Norseman's settlement. Throughout the long wars and counter-wars with the English foe and the alien English life, the town was many times alternately absorbed by native life and reconquered for the alien. Even Galway still bore its famous inscription above its city gate not three centuries ago. "O Lord," it read, "deliver us from the fury of the O'Flaherties." Law, at first, forbade even the entrance of the 'Irishry' into the towns and then later decreed that no Irishman should trade with another. The towns were to remain English, and later, Protestant, and

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the merchant-burghers who flourished in them must remain of English blood and habit.

All that, of course, has long since vanished. The Irish have occupied the towns of their own land, their blood and habit hold sway and fashion urban commerce in the towns and cities. The change has been a slow and durable growth, flowing on beneath the surface of political and cultural strife. But like all growth it has been a process of incorporation, too. Today, to a casual eye, the shops, the commerce, the social life of the Irish town is much like that of all modern western Europe.

Such is the history, briefly put, which has provided the scene that interests the social anthropologist. It is in this scene that he can inquire into the bonds this conquest has created. He can appraise through them the factors which make up the countryman's participation in the larger world. Many fields for investigation present themselves in this connection. Townsmen and countrymen are now equally part, each in his own way, of that whole we name Irish society. From his own vantage each acts toward the other and builds up a relationship with him in such a way as to determine in some degree the form of that whole. This relation, an instance of the age-old reciprocity between town and country, invites our examination.

In Ireland today, one can see this relation most definitely and most significantly in the ties between shopkeeper and countryman. In the west and south

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
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hedgerows. It is hard to realize that the close-set pattern of hedged or walled fields which now distinguishes so much of the countryside is for the most part only a century or so old. In many cases it can be shown that the fields and fences were laid out within the last hundred years, following the break-up of the rundale village system and the re-distribution of the land (Chapter 6). In the eastern lowlands, where English influence has long been at work, the field pattern and hedgerows are no doubt much older, but in general the small cultivated patches were separated by mere balks or waste strips, varying from one to ten feet in width. Stones from the fields, hand-picked or removed with crow-bar and slipe (Chapter 12) were dumped on the balks or, more frequently, piled into " cairns " in the middle of the fields. Such stone-heaps are often found accompanying prehistoric field-systems, for example in Jutland.

Fig. 10.

Stone walls or high earthen fences surrounded the house-clusters and enclosed each group of open fields, separating them from the common grazing land which lay outside and stretched away to the " head-ditch " on the mountain. As the rundale holdings gave way to individual farms the land was re-divided, the old ditches planted with whitethorn and new ditches, also set with thorn, were constructed—a process which was being actively carried out during the first half of the 19th century. One result of the scattering of the farms was the appearance of the long strip or " ladder farms," the cross hedges of the strip resembling the rungs of a ladder.

The oldest fences, then, are the protective banks around farms which occupy old village sites—a survival no doubt of the rings around the ancient raths—and the march-dykes or divisions between townlands. The varied vegetation on these older banks betrays them just as it does the pre-enclosure hedgerows in England: their massive tumbled ruins are overgrown with whins, blackthorn, sally, ash and bramble. There are, however, still older forgotten divisions on the hillsides dating from various prehistoric periods; some have

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CHAPTER VI.

VILLAGE AND BOOLEY.

●361 Throughout the Irish countryside the farmhouses and cottages lie scattered as though casually spilt over the surface, forming an even film of population everywhere except in the mountains and bogs. Among students of rural settlement this country is rightly taken as one of the best European examples of the dispersed type of habitation. We very rarely see, except in a few exotic " plantations " which languish here and there, large agricultural villages of the English or European pattern, with their tree-shaded greens, their shops, churches and inns. A cluster of more than a dozen houses is almost sure to be the result of industrial influence—the erection of a mill or factory. Such a scheme of scattered dwellings, each set among its own fields, seems appropriate to a region where there are no inducements such as the needs of defence or the lack of water to encourage agglomeration, and where pastoral interests predominate, the animals needing constant attention.

361 But if we look more carefully at the Irish scene, and if we
174 turn back to the records of history and prehistory, we shall find proof that the completely isolated farms are a fairly modern feature in most parts, and that house-clusters formerly predominated. Here and there, especially in the west, we see little " clusters " " onsets " or " clachans " of peasant houses, a dozen or so together, which preserve something of the character of the old villages we shall try to describe in this chapter. Over a wider area we find smaller clusters, three or

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361 174 four houses together, which can almost invariably be shown to have once been larger: even these tiny groupings are referred to as "towns," and the use of this word suggests that such clusters were once the nuclei of the "townlands." It is because of this association with the vital townland unit, and because many rural customs find their explanation in past conditions, that I have thought it worth while to attempt a reconstruction of the chief features of these old communities. This is based largely on records and on surviving examples which I have studied in Co. Donegal and Co. Antrim. Allowance must be made for differences between one region and another, but I believe the following description to be applicable to most parts of Ireland, though the decay of the village-system began earlier in some areas than in others.

Travellers a century or so ago tell us that villages with 50 or 60 houses were not uncommon. In 1802 Donegal is said to have had about 500 villages, with an average perhaps of 20 or 30 families to each, but they were "dispersing daily into separate habitations and holdings" (Figs. 13 & 14). One uses the term village for want of a better word, for such clusters lack many of the well-known features of the English village. They were essentially communities of related families bound together in "friendship"—the word "friend" means a blood-relation in Ireland—with one or two surnames predominating in each group. This fact is still true of townland populations even though the holdings are scattered, and it helps to explain the prevalence of nicknames in rural Ireland, [55] and, for the same reason, in Wales and Scotland. The houses were clustered without plan or order (and never strung together end-to-end) generally in some sheltered hollow in the richest part of the townland, though they might be disposed along a road with some semblance of regularity. Shelter is always the first consideration. I have been told in Donegal that house sites were selected by the simple process of throwing up a hat on a windy day and letting the wind decide by noting its resting place.

174 491 361 Made roads were almost unknown in hilly districts—there was "no wheel car" among a population of 8,000 in one

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[p.49]

Fig. 13. Two Donegal townlands in 1834; showing village clusters.

Fig. 14. The same, showing scattered dwellings and separate holdings (Einzelhöfe) in 1902/3.

Based on the Ordnance Survey by permission of the Minister for Finance of Ireland.

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
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Donegal parish in 1837—and all the carrying depended upon slide cars and creels (Chapter 12). The village had neither shop nor inn, and required little besides salt and iron from the market town. These self-sufficing communities were held together by blood ties and by the exchange of services under the Irish open-field or "rundale" system of cultivation. Around the house-clusters were small walled gardens and haggards, but the arable land was an unenclosed open field in which each holder had his scattered patches, averaging perhaps a quarter of an acre in area. There are cases on record where 29 partnership-peasants shared 422 plots of ground, where one man held 32 different patches, or again where 26 people had shares in a field of half an acre. In some districts it is known that the plots changed hands periodically. but no memory of this survives in the areas I am acquainted with. Live stock was sometimes subject to joint-ownership, with disastrous results where, for instance, three men claimed shares in a horse and could not agree as to the ownership of the fourth leg. But most of the stories that are told about rundale farming belong to the period of its decline.

Between the cultivated patches, which were dug with the spade or ploughed and devoted almost exclusively to potatoes and oats, ran waste strips or balks ("mearings," "bones" or "ribs") often left as much as three yards wide, apparently from a sort of pride, though they had their uses both as a source of hay and as tracks for the creel ponies when they could not enter the waterlogged plots. In the absence of fences all livestock had to be tethered, spancelled, herded, or sent to the mountain pastures during the crop season, which traditionally began on St. Patrick's Day (March 17th) and ended on the last day of October (Hallowe'en), when the animals were free to wander over the whole townland throughout the winter. "Any that had not their potatoes dug, or other crops off the ground, were much injured, neither could any one man venture to grow turnips, clover or other green crops . . . no one would attempt to manure better or otherwise improve his proportion, as his neighbour's cattle only would have the benefit." It is clear that the introduction of the

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
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potato was one of the factors that led to the decline of rundale agriculture, both because of its late harvest and because it resulted in increased populations which brought disastrous subdivision of the holdings. Under the " gavelkind " code of inheritance a man's property was divided equally among all his sons, so that the impossibly small fields came to be spoken of not as the standard " cow's grass," but as a " foot " and even a half-foot or " cleet."

Much has been written of the drawbacks of the rundale system. It is so easy to condemn it—the " fights, trespasses, confusion, disputes and assaults " to which it gave rise, the wretched poverty which it bred, the evil consequences of dwelling in packed house clusters—that it is well to recall the better side of the system before it fell into decline. A writer in 1853 has left his " recollections of nights of social converse, of aid in sickness, of sympathy in joy and sorrow, of combined operations of defence against bailiff or gauger which contrasted mournfully with the solitary grandeur of the new dwelling." Another apologist wrote : " the closer the rundale system is followed, the more the unwritten customs and regulations observed, the more do intelligent tenants regret a departure from them." Many of its better features, indeed, have survived the enclosure movement and the separation of farms ; we may cite co-operation in farm work and the social fire-side evenings or " caileys." " Gatherings " of many kinds, for work and pleasure, distinguished the rundale communities. Every village had its musician, piper or fiddler, who was often maimed in some way and supported himself by his skill. Folk songs, occupational airs and epic tales were kept alive in this way.

It was formerly the task of an appointed leader in a townland or group of townlands to see that customs were observed, to arrange the casting of lots in re-allotting strips, and so on. Probably we should see in the " king " not long ago recognized as leader in such communities as Rathlin and Tory a relic of this custom.

To understand the village-system in working order we must see it as part of a wider pattern in which cattle-herding

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
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343 "troubles" of 25 years ago. Moreover underground "hides" have been constructed in recent times by poteen-makers. A description of a Donegal example said to have been made about 150 years ago will be found in *Antiquity*, June, 1939, p. 220.

351 Finally, something should be said about the disposition
361 of the farm buildings, but this is a subject which calls for research. Broadly speaking the arrangement native to the country is some kind of long house, with the offices under the same roof as the kitchen and room. I use the word "native" because in areas of strong English influence such as Wexford what seems to be an introduced type of lay-out is the courtyard style where the buildings are grouped round the sides of a square. There are many approximations to this arrangement in various parts of the east and south of Ireland, and I do not think, as my friend Colonel R. G. Berry has suggested, that the type is native. Where the Old Irish homestead has a number of outbuildings these tend to be placed in front of and parallel to the dwelling house. Efforts to persuade the peasant to put his manure heap and his animals behind the house have, until recently, failed, for he likes to keep an eye on his wealth!

9. Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
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443 527 at Ballycastle, for instance, lasted a full week and though now limited to a single day is still the great event of the year in north Antrim. August and perhaps February were closely associated with the sale of sheep, the May and November fairs with cattle. In the early 19th century the great fair of Ballinasloe in Co. Galway handled as many as 20,000 cattle and 90,000 sheep. "Their whole thought," wrote Knight of the Mayo peasantry about that time, "seems to be going to fairs and selling or exchanging." "A yard of linen or a couple of chickens," says Arthur Young, "will carry an unemployed hand ten miles."

443 366 It is by the fairs and not by the calendar that the countryman dates events. It may be observed that the popularity of fairs, with their emphasis on livestock, illustrates the strength of the pastoral tradition. They have been something of an obstacle to good husbandry because they occur at the changes of the seasons and thus interfere with field work, particularly with harvest. Nowadays most of the fairs are associated with urban settlements, but the name "Fair *Hill*" still clings to the streets where they are held, and many a town has its fair hill just outside. On such sites tents were formerly erected for refreshment, and there are certain old fair grounds now abandoned where you may see the grassy foundations of the huts and the fire holes where the giant cauldrons were boiled. In the ancient aireachts streets of booths were set up for the fair period, so that they might be described as temporary towns. Professor MacNeill has put forward the thesis that these were the "cities" named by Ptolemy in his description of Ireland.

369 361 This brings us to the problem of urban origins. It is perhaps true to say that the fair used to be regarded as the product of the town, but recent research supports the view that the fair precedes the town and was one factor in its rise. Apart from comparative evidence drawn from certain north African communities, for instance, anyone who has watched a small town on fair day must get the impression that he is looking at something which has been going on throughout the

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
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ages. He sees the country taking complete possession of the town, blocking its streets, ignoring its traffic: he is in the presence of a force older and more fundamental than the town which has given it hospitality (Fig. 110).

When we inquire into the origins and antiquity of the Irish towns we find that very few go back to pre-Norman times, while it is abundantly clear that periodic gatherings in "temporary towns" are far older. The pre-Christian fortress-palaces such as Tara and Navan did not survive into historic times, and as a rule the church in Celtic lands had no civic interests, though many a confiscated monastic site was revived as the nucleus of a town when occupied by English troops in the 16th century. Some coastal cities such as Dublin and Waterford were founded by Norsemen, but most of the inland towns grew up as castle-market-towns during the Anglo-Norman period or in the plantations of the 16th and 17th centuries. To-day the five chief seaports, none of them strictly "native," contain one quarter of the total population: very few inland towns have more than 10,000 people, and only one of these is outside the industrial Six Counties. Most of the fair centres have a population of from 500 to 5,000: there are 187 towns of this size in Eire. There are 202 "towns" with from 200 to 500 inhabitants and only 25 with more than 5,000 (Fig. 107).

It is to these small towns, scattered at convenient intervals of 10 or 15 miles up and down the country, that the fairs have been attracted, the centre of authority and administration becoming the centre of exchange. Although most of the settlements are of "foreign" origin, they have become thoroughly Irish. The family system and blood-ties link up town and country, and trade follows the personal bond of "friendship," that is, blood relationship, however remote. Over shops and inns it is family names one sees painted up: O'Flynn and Flanagan take the place of the English "General Stores" and "Red Lion." Since the countryman's money comes only at the periodic fairs, he relies on the shopkeeper's credit, and the debt must never be entirely paid off, for that

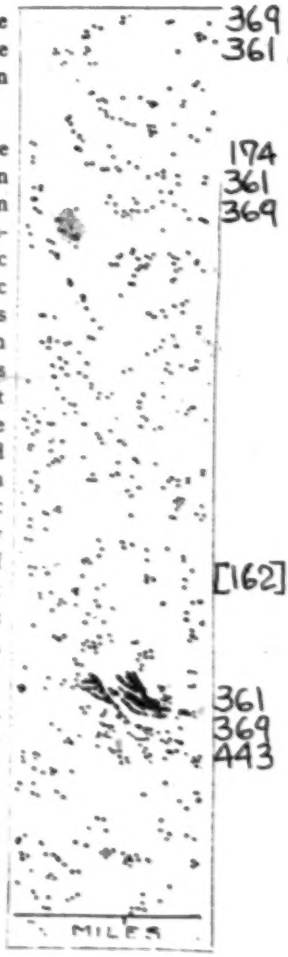

Fig. 107.
A market town with scattered country population. Each dot represents a building.

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
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361 would "spoil" social relations. Even in the larger towns the [369] shopkeeper is reluctant to have his bills completely settled by [443] his customers. These personal ties readily give rise to cliques and municipal corruption: it must be admitted that the

[162]

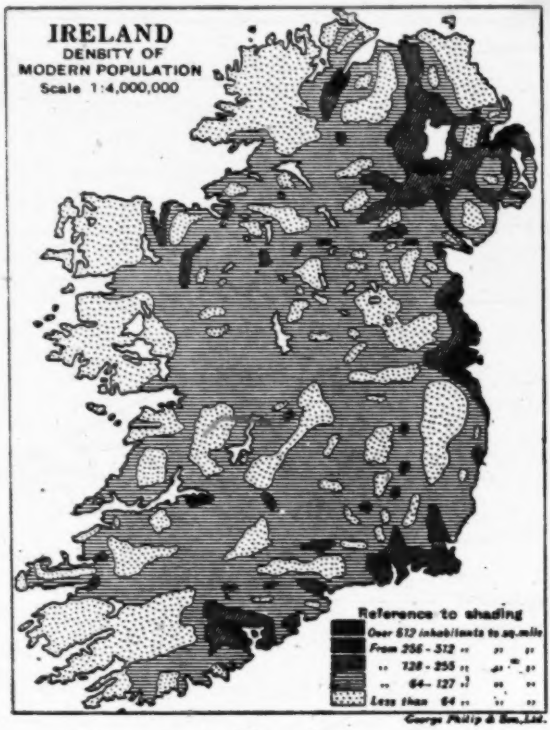
IRELAND
DENSITY OF
MODERN POPULATION
Scale 1:4,000,000
Reference to shading
Over 512 inhabitants to sq.mile
From 256 - 512 " " "
" 128 - 255 " " "
" 64 - 127 " " "
Less than 64 " " "
George Philip & Son, Ltd.

Fig. 108.

corporate spirit is poorly developed. Similarly the Irish country town is generally lacking in any native traditions of [344] civic architecture, and even the splendid buildings of Dublin and Galway together with the distinctive court-houses of smaller towns owe much to outside influence. The small

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
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town consists of streets of houses of peasant style strung end to end, picturesque with their washes of many colours, but perpetuating and even accentuating the filth which can be tolerated in a village setting of streams and fields but which becomes highly objectionable under urban conditions. On the other hand there are some spaciously-planned country towns which have an air of quiet opulence reminding one of the English heritage to which they owe their foundation. I am aware that in saying this I am ignoring the " inner flame " of the Irish towns, but it cannot be denied that externally they have much to learn from the older civic traditions of the sister isle. Dr. Arensberg has analysed the pattern of the country town and described it as " an extension townwards of the countryman's own social order." He shows that, until recent times, its economy has been that of distribution, not production. Banks and pubs and shops do most of the business and owing to the family system " Ireland is better supplied with shops, at least in number, than any comparable European nation." If we exclude the Lough Neagh basin, all the denser areas of population are coastal and most of the country's manufacturing industries are concentrated in the ports (Fig. 108).

To return to the fair, we have tried to show how the periodic gatherings in which they originated were associated with ritual and emotional experiences connected with the celebration of recurring events such as seed-time and harvest. Breaking the routine of toil, it is characteristic that much licence was permitted on these occasions. Until recent times a strong spirit of revelry and a temporary slackening of the moral code distinguished the great Irish fairs. Even to-day the police or civic guards make allowances for fair day and turn a blind eye to many offences against the law: it is recognized as a time of special licence. Games, dancing and faction fights were the order of the day once the buying and selling were over. Until a generation ago cruel "knuckle-dusters " (Fig. 109) were carried in readiness, and the countryman's heavy felt hat was worn as a defence against the

Fig. 109.

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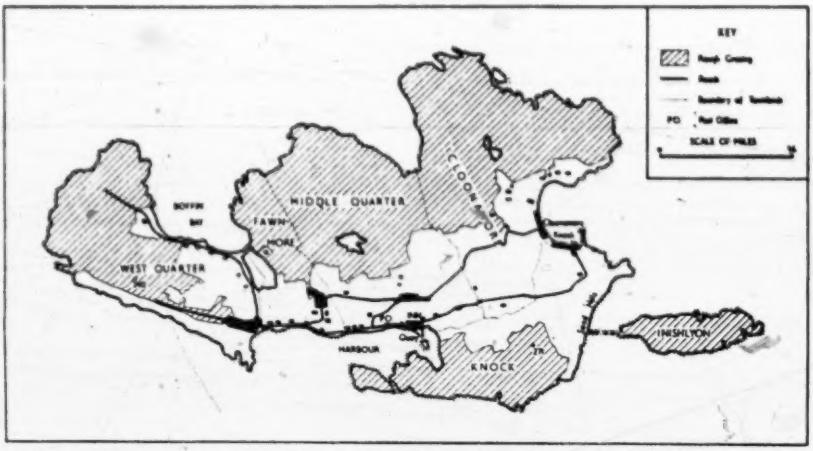

FIG. 1. The townlands of Inishbofin. Inishlyon has no inhabitants, but is used as sheep pasture. Cloonamore and Knock appear as a single line of houses on the shore but are in different townlands. The boundaries of the rough pasture and the distribution of houses were mapped in July, 1954. (Based on Ordnance Survey, 25 inches to 1 mile, Co. Galway, sheet 9, 1898, by permission of the Minister for Finance of Ireland.)

[p. 204(A)]

12: Freeman K-5 (1954) 1958 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inishbofin

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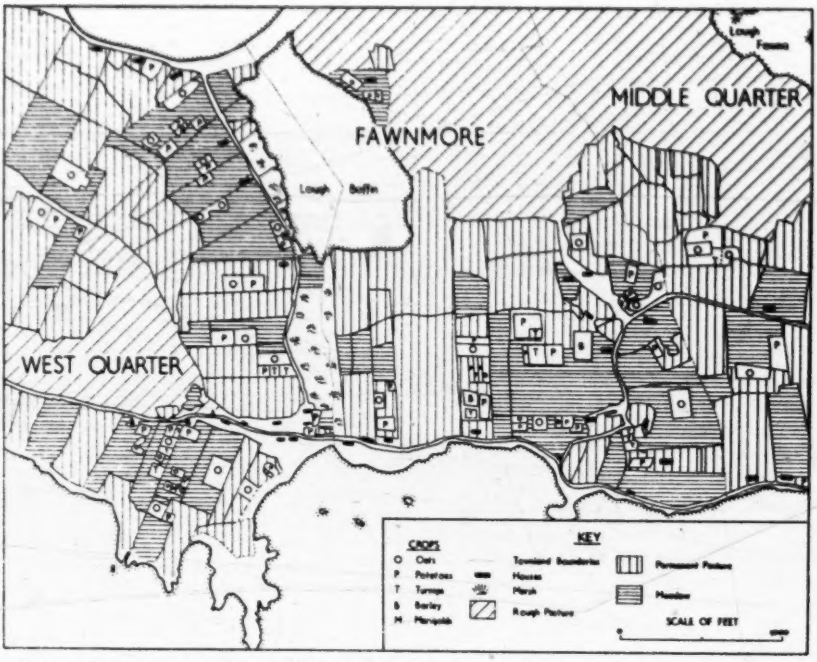

FIG. 2. Land use in part of Inishbofin. The rectangular pattern is characteristic of many areas "striped" by the Congested Districts Board. Small crop "gardens," fields of meadow and improved pasture, exist beside each farmhouse, and roads lead to the "commonage." (Field mapping done by Mr. Clifford Hargreaves, B.A., of the Department of Geography, University of Manchester, in July 1954, to whom grateful acknowledgment is made.)

[p. 205(A)]

228 to collect one stone in an hour. Kelp
[381] (seaweed) burning for iodine on the beaches was almost extinct by 1894.[17]

Settlement and Population

● 361 Of the 96 houses counted as inhabited, 53 are in five hamlets and another six in a loose cluster near the harbor. There is no village as the term is commonly understood, though the main center is beside the harbor, where the inn occupies the one-time "big house" of the Allies family, with the church and the Post Office a short distance away. In
[444] all there are eight shops, none of which is recognizable from the outside, as everyone knows them: one is attached to the inn, another to the Post Office, a third occupies a specially built room in a farmyard, and the rest are in front rooms of houses. All the houses except about six have land attached.

Is this nucleated settlement as such?
361 On the first Ordnance Survey map
178 (1838) there were large clusters of houses and on the 1898 map the vast majority
621 of the houses were in clusters. The redistribution of land and building of new houses has broken up many hamlets or made new ones, for example in Knock townland (405 acres) where an old hamlet on a sandy site has been replaced by a new one on drier ground by the shore, with 15 of the townland's 17 houses. In Cloonamore (663 acres)
361 eight houses are placed along the shore
621 and eleven others scattered over the hillside; in Middlequarter (608 acres) there are eleven houses in the main hamlet, six beside the harbor and eleven others at various points beside the shore or on side roads; in Fawnmore (199 acres) six houses out of sixteen are in a loosely defined hamlet; and in West-
361 quarter (523 acres) nine houses out of

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 349.

[P.208(A)]

[361] sixteen are in a similarly formless cluster.

167 Emigration has entered deeply into the fabric of life: in 1841, Inishbofin
161 with Inishark had 1612 people, but ten years later there were only 1047. A rise to 1236 in 1861 and 1262 in 1871 was followed by a drop to 997 in 1891, when there were 215 families of whom one-quarter were said to be "very poor."[18] Steadily the population declined, to 510 in 1936, 406 in 1946, and 341 in 1951, and now less than 300 (including 40 in Inishark). One-quarter of the families were interviewed in 1954; of these only one-third were "normal families" of parents with children. In the school there were only 29 children aged 5–14, whereas the normal figure would be 48. On Inishark there are now only nine able-bodied men, six of whom are needed to man a boat seaworthy in winter, with the result that an epidemic might be disastrous. Permanent emigration to Britain, or, if possible, to America, is favored by the young and adventurous. Even in 1893 seasonal emigration to Britain as harvesters or domestics was declining,[19] though a number of people went to America for several years, saved money, and returned to the islands. A large proportion of the people have spent several years in the United States. In many cases a family has its older relatives in America, its younger ones in Britain.

Conclusion

657 Having reviewed the economic geography of this island certain conclusions emerge. First, the present relative comfort of the population has been made possible only by past and present government assistance bestowed with lib-

[113] [18] Congested Districts Board, Base Line Reports, Clifden district, 1891.
[19] C. R. Browne, *op. cit.*, p. 353.

[p.208(B)]

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

175 a system of dioceses and raised St. Patrick's Church at Armagh
[195] to the primacy in the eleventh century.

But it was the Norsemen who established the first port-cities
175 of Ireland—Dublin, Wexford, Waterford, Cork and Limerick—
162 and provided the Anglo-Normans with bases from which to attempt their conquest. It was the fate of these newcomers, as of earlier invaders, to be absorbed, but the towns which they and their successors established became the instruments of Anglicization. Yet outside the nine south-eastern counties where the Anglo-Norman influence was strongest, there are few towns which are older than the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and as late as 1841 less than 15 per cent of the Irish population was urban. It is significant that even today no inland Irish town has a population reaching 20,000: in the Republic, indeed, only one or two exceed 10,000, and that barely. It is the immemorial peasant tradition which dominates the heart of Ireland. In some inland counties the rural population is still as much as 90 per cent of the total: for the Republic of Ireland as a whole it amounts to 62 per cent, and the figure for the more industrialized counties of Northern Ireland is only slightly under 50 per cent. In Ulster the plantation of English and especially of Scots Presbyterian settlers in the seventeenth century was at last successful in maintaining its identity, though as we shall see the material culture is strongly moulded to its Irish environment. Partly because this region of entry has received through the centuries almost every culture-layer that has been deposited in Ireland, there is perhaps a greater variety of survivals in Ulster than in any other part of Ireland. In some ways this most British part of Ireland is also the most Irish.

311 Although the tribal nomadism of medieval Ireland has been
● 361 exaggerated, there can be no doubt that the pastoral tradition
175 has dominated Irish life through the ages. Cultivation was certainly practised from Neolithic times, but the older crops, wheat and barley, were in course of time supplemented and in many parts replaced by oats, which became the corn of Ireland as of Scotland, food for men as well as animals. For half the year the arable land was under stubble, pastured and manured by grazing stock, so that the favoured acres around the settle-

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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ment—the infield—might produce grain year after year. The rough grazing beyond—the outfield—was broken up periodically in temporary enclosures, and it may be assumed that such a system had developed from the shifting agriculture of prehistoric times. Relics of outfield cultivation, usually in association with family-communes, can be traced in many regions of difficulty throughout Western Europe, both in the mountains of the centre and along the oceanic fringe from Spain to Norway. 'If we knew medieval England completely', states Sir John Clapham, 'we should find plenty of it.'[1] In most lowland areas of good soil throughout western Europe, however, it was replaced by a system involving large open fields, normally three in number, each of which was used in rotation for autumn sown corn, usually wheat, followed by spring corn and fallow. This scheme called for considerable organization and a large variety of tools and implements: it came to be governed by complex regulations and controlled by the lord of the manor, and it is significant that the feudal system and in due course the nation-state evolved in areas where the openfield economy was practised. There was more freedom and flexibility in the smaller and simpler outfield system, and in Ireland the feudal order was successfully established only in the English Pale, where the three-field system was introduced by Anglo-Norman settlers. Elsewhere the tribal system prevailed, and for the study of folk-customs the important unit within that system was the family commune living in clustered house-groups, hamlets or clachans. The prevailing cattle-economy called for a minimum of equipment, the subordinate cultivation little more than spades or light ploughs and hand-operated tools. Even the lowliest members of society had some interest in the land and its cultivation was not beyond their means. Possession of a cow, a horse, a pig or a few sheep demanded even less in the way of equipment and tools. The simple arts and crafts of prehistoric times proved adequate, and the poorest man was able to play his part in the community and stand on his own feet. A democratic

[1]H. J. Clapham, *A Concise Economic History of Britain* (1949), 48, Similarly Gilbert Slater, *The English Peasantry and the Enclosure of Common Fields* (1907) regards what he terms the Celtic system 'as influencing to varying degrees the type of village community in England.'

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

way of life was fostered by the ease with which the humbler members of the community could compete with others in arts demanding not wealth but personal qualities, in poetry, oratory, song and physical prowess. Down to our own day the small size of the average farm has encouraged the survival of simple tools and limited the acquisition of machines. Subdivision of farms and the depressing effects of short leases and absenteeism were contributory factors. Subdivision of holdings was prohibited under an Act of 1881, but like so many other prohibited practices it did not cease.

The retention of many of the attributes of a peasant society is the key to the survival of the folk ways with which we are concerned in the following chapters. Even the Great Famine which marks a grim watershed in social and economic history did not entirely obliterate them, though it had such far-reaching effects that it might be regarded as the end of prehistoric times in Ireland. First in importance is the strength of blood-ties in extended family groups, still maintained even in many urban communities. During the air raids on Belfast, for example, the problem of finding billets for evacuated homeless was complicated by the refusal of large groups of related families to be separated from each other. In remote rural areas the blood-tie is a dominant force, governing economic as well as social relationships,[1] its loyalties overriding the impartial administration of justice. A relative is a 'friend', even if 'far-out'—that is, remotely connected—and friendship is a matter of blood relationship. A peasant community is concerned first and foremost with the maintenance and continuity of society: it does not judge—and cannot be judged—purely by economic standards. Immemorially peasant families have been large, and childbearing is widely regarded as part of the ritual necessary to bring success with the stock and the crops. In rural Ireland barrenness in a wife still tends to be regarded as an unnatural and disgraceful thing, and many superstitious cures for 'the sterile curse' are recorded. This is but one example of a widespread attitude towards life, to which comparative anthropology offers many parallels. Sympathetic magic, or the performance

[1] C. M. Arensberg and S. T. Kimball, *Family and Community in Ireland* (1940), Ch. 13.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

of certain acts in the hope of inducing success in similar fields of action, provides an explanation of many of the folk-practices with which we are concerned.

Pushed too far, however, the observance of such antiquated practices in the end defeated its purpose and threatened the extinction of traditional life. A clue to much of the paradox in Irish culture is to be found in the reaction which follows an adherence to custom carried beyond the breaking-point. Spade-labour for example has reluctantly given way to the plough, but once the plough is generally accepted the spade becomes a despised implement so that a vegetable garden is a rare thing, at best a tiny plot left to the care of the women. In another field, the substitution of the vilest American films for the traditional ceilidhe gathering is a sad change. The crisis of the Great Famine was a major turning-point, and there followed a general reaction against everything associated with it. This was particularly true of the Irish peasants who sought refuge across the Atlantic: the American immigrants, driven from the land by extreme poverty, were determined to have nothing more to do with it and became almost invariably town-dwellers. The donkey and the goat, symbols of poverty, are neglected and despised in many parts of Ireland. A Donegal crofter once told me he dare not keep a donkey for fear of being unable to marry off his daughters: instead he kept a horse, though he could ill afford one, for its prestige value. The dangerously monotonous diet of Irish countryfolk, also, can be explained in the light of the famine. So bitter is the folk-memory of these times that useful wild sources of food are now neglected and despised; for example, wild berries of all kinds, the ubiquitous eel, hare and rabbit; the cresses and the edible seaweeds and fungi. It should be added, however, that some of these foods were apparently tabu—the rabbit, an Anglo-Norman invader, was rarely eaten—and that the potato had played its part in debasing diet in the period before the famine.[1]

Perhaps the most striking example of reaction is to be found in the expressed desire of most country people to have an isolated dwelling-house. The clachan or hamlet, once the centre of communal life and tradition, is despised, a symbol of squabbling

[1] R. N. Salaman, *The History and Social Influence of the Potato* (1949), Ch.15.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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178 poverty, and it is the wish of nearly everyone to have a house where he cannot be overlooked. What is surprising in the light [361] of these physical changes is the extent to which old customs and habits of mind survive to this day. As the late R. A. S. Macalister wrote in his last book, perhaps not entirely without malice: 'The importance of Ireland is that, thanks to the 'time-lag', it has rendered to Anthropology the unique, inestimable, indispensable service of carrying a primitive European *Precivilization* down into late historic times, and there holding it up for our observation and instruction.'[1]

178 133 Finally we should notice how the physical diversity of the country conspired with its remoteness to permit the survival through the centuries of indigenous peoples and customs. 'Mountainy men', in the picturesque Irish phrase, keep their foothold in every corner of the land, for mountain refuges lie all around the coast. Even the broad central lowland is diversified by several isolated ranges, still more by extensive bogs where movement has always been difficult. Before forest clearance and drainage were effected, woods, lakes and bogs were widespread, and the English made every effort to destroy the forest remnants because they sheltered the native 'woodkernes'. So it had been in Norman England; where the land became difficult, through mountain or forest, or where water filled large spaces, the pikesman or bowman could hold his own against the man on horseback, and a democratic flavour was in the air.

[1]R. A. S. Macalister, *The Archaeology of Ireland* (1949), x.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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FROM FOREST TO FARMLAND

Little attention has been given to the Irish openfield system.[1] It has escaped the notice of historians because the revolution which broke it down was a prolonged and silent one, involving no Enclosure Acts such as those which record the disappearance of the English openfields. Under the Irish system it was the practice, in some areas at least, for the plots to change hands periodically among co-partners by the casting of lots. Thus the transition to consolidated holdings was easier than under the English system, where the scattered plough strips were apparently permanently held. It is important to examine the openfield system more closely than might seem to be warranted by its almost complete disappearance from the modern scene, because it was against this background that many of the tools and customs we shall discuss were evolved. Just as in lowland England the English village was inseparable from its openfields, so in Ireland hamlets or 'clachans' accompanied the old form of land utilization. They will crop up again and again in the chapters which follow. But today and for the last century or so the isolated farm has characterized the Irish rural scene (Fig. 4). From some elevated viewpoint in the mountainy parts one may count hundreds of small whitewashed homesteads dotted among the fields, each nestling behind a handful of windbent trees and approached by its own access-road—the loaning or borheen beloved of the sentimental song writers. Every farmstead has the air of a fortress, an independent unit within its jealously guarded boundary fences, defended by a heavy iron gate hung between stout stone gate-pillars (Fig. 5) and claiming rights of way whose protection keeps the town solicitors profitably engaged. The degree of independence has been notably strengthened by the Land Acts (1869–1925) under which former tenants have become their own landlords. Peasant-proprietorship is an established fact throughout the country, though it has by no means solved Ireland's problems as some politician-prophets claimed it would.

The truth is that, taking the country as a whole, most of the farms are too small to be truly independent of their neighbours. Bitter experience and the traditional land-hunger of a community

[1] E. E. Evans, *Geography*, 24 (1939), 24–36; D. McCourt, *Economic History Review*, 7, 369–76.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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the rural community. It is convenient for the farmer to live among his fields near his stock—to look after the calving cow—and for the farmer's wife to keep a close watch on her poultry. (Not long ago, as we shall see, it was quite common for the cows to share the kitchen, and the cow-byre and dwelling house are still often under the same roof.) But for jobs requiring traction-implements or expensive tools the help of neighbours is necessary. The small family-farm can support only one horse, and thus there is a good deal of co-operation, perforce, among neighbours in tilling the ground, in harvest work and other operations. Both seed-time and harvest are, in the Irish climate, seasons of heavy pressure, when the work must be got through speedily, and nothing is so conducive to speed as a 'gathering' of neighbours among whom a spirit of rivalry acts as a spur. These relics of former communal habits are becoming less frequent with mechanization, but in many districts not less than a quarter of the small farmers possess only one horse, so that 'joining' or 'cooring' to make up a two-horse team is usual. In all such cases no money payments are made. A fairly common practice, however, is for the small farmer to buy a second horse at the February fairs and sell it in May after the spring work is finished.

In this and other ways the isolated houses are bound by ties of neighbourhood and friendship so that one may think of them as forming close-knit communities lacking only the physical nucleation of former times. The improving planners, eager to confer urban amenities on the countryside, would have 'housing schemes' and planned villages in place of scattered houses, but nothing could be less suitable under existing conditions. Physical independence is the price paid for good neighbourliness. The old clachans, necessary so long as the infield-outfield or rundale method of land-use was practised, became a hopeless anachronism when new tools and new crops brought with them a rotational system and hedged fields.

We have little knowledge of the nature of rural settlement in sixteenth and seventeenth century Ireland, but since partnership farming, presumably with clachans and rundale, is well attested in ancient Ireland and is known to have been widespread in the eighteenth century it is safe to suppose that there was a

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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continuous tradition of partnership. Rundale, as we find it in decay in the nineteenth century, was a diseased system that had outlived its purpose. A few examples will serve to illustrate the appalling conditions to which it led when the removal of traditional checks and the adoption of the potato had allowed the population to expand recklessly within the framework of an inherited system of land use and settlement.

Our first example comes from the present century, and from Co. Mayo. The clachan of Rathlackan, when the Congested Districts Board tried to disperse it in 1918, was occupied by fifty-six families whose land was scattered in 1,500 fragments, some of them no more than a dozen square yards in area (Fig. 6). A two-acre holding was split into eighteen tiny plots, and on the average twenty-seven lots were held by each farm. Such was the confusion that it was not until 1942 that the process of redistribution and consolidation of holdings was completed, with the result that 'fairly compact holdings' were provided for thirty-two families.[1]

The following quotations are from the pamphlets of an 'improving landlord' in Donegal, and refer to a period about a hundred years earlier, in the 1840s.

'We suppose it would not be believed that in this district, until very lately, fences were altogether unknown. In some instances a tenant having any part of a townland (no matter how small), had his proportion in thirty or forty different places, and without fences between them. One poor man who had his inheritance in thirty-two different places, abandoned them in utter despair of ever being able to make them out . . . The rundale system was a complete bar to any attempt at improvement; as, on a certain day, all the cattle belonging to the townland were brought from the mountains and allowed to run indiscriminately over the arable land. And in spring no individual occupier would set or sow, or labour in the fields, before a certain day, when the cattle were again sent to the hills, until after harvest. In one instance a small field of about half an acre was held by twenty-six people.'[2]

[1] *The Irish Times* (12th Jan., 1948). This was achieved only at the cost of the physical collapse of one land-officer and the mental breakdown of another.
[2] Lord George Hill, *Gweedore*, 22, 46.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

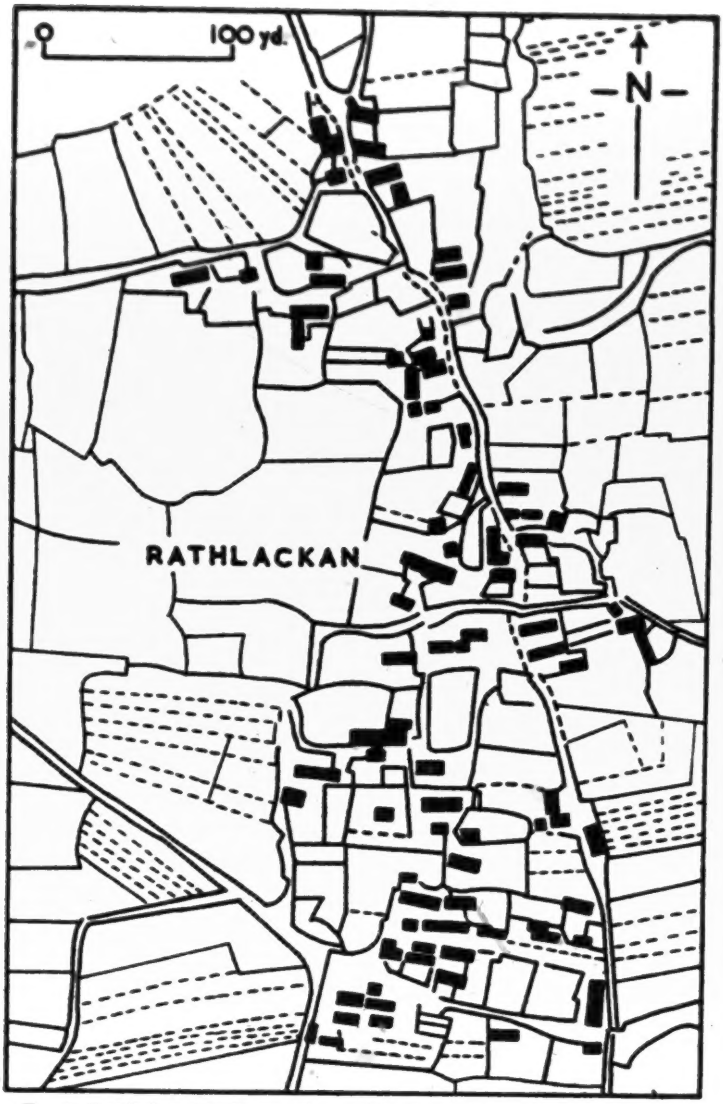

FIG. 6. Rathlackan, Co. Mayo: the rundale cluster with some of the openfield strips as they were before reorganization began in 1918.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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In Connacht conditions were even worse, as may be judged by the persistence of the Rathlackan cluster down to 1942. So swollen were some of these settlements that one of them, Menlough near Galway, now consisting of a dozen farms set among the ruins of others, is said to have had 2,000 inhabitants in 1845, while lacking 'head or centre, market, church, chapel or school'.[1]

In Ulster there are many examples of small clusters which have persisted because they did not become swollen to disastrous proportions. They were characteristic, for instance, of flax-growing areas and were occupied by farmer-weavers who depended on each others' services at harvest-time, and they survived the crisis of the great famine although many decayed with the decline of hand-loom weaving soon afterwards. Despite all the disadvantages of life in these clachans, their inhabitants were reluctant to leave them. It was stated in evidence before the Devon Commission that even if they were moving only half a mile away 'they were crying as if they were going to America'. It was in fact from such decaying house-clusters that a great number of the emigrants to the United States set out across the seas in the second half of last century.

[1]T. C. Foster, *Letters*, 293.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

since they were based on the fertility of the land rather than its acreage, and it seems that many moorland tracts were not divided until fairly recent times, for they were formerly shared as common summer pasturage by the people of a whole parish or barony, covering 100 sq. miles or more. In such hilly areas the townlands may be as much as 2,000 acres: on the other hand in thickly-settled lowlands they are frequently less than 100 acres, and some anomalous fragments of an acre or two are designated townlands. This diversity also reflects cultural differences both between regions and between various classes from the kings and chiefs down to the humblest of bondmen. The first Ordnance Survey (1830–42) suppressed many of the local names for subdivisions and applied the term townland universally. Though the townland appears to have been equated with an agricultural unit, the ploughland or *seisrach*, it is clear that in many parts of the country 'the cow's grass' was the effective unit of measurement. Of Donegal about 1840 we read: 'The land is never let, sold or devised by the acre, but by 'a cow's grass'. This is a complement of land well understood by the people, being in fact the general standard; and they judge of the dimensions of a holding by its being to the extent, as the case may be, of one, two or three 'cows' grass'. They have divided not only into the fourth part of a cow's grass, called a 'foot', but into the eighth part of a cow's grass, or half a foot, denominated 'a cleet'.'[1] In Bantry, Co. Cork, land was let 'in the wilder parts by what is termed the gneeve, which is the twelfth part of a townland, and therefore of very undefined acreage'.[2]

To judge from surviving examples of clachans and openfields, it was customary for each house in the cluster to have a small enclosure or 'gort' (garden) adjacent to it, their high walls lining a maze of narrow lanes winding haphazard among the houses (Fig. 6). These settlements were characterized by an extreme disorder, as though the houses, in the words of one writer, had fallen 'in a shower from the sky'.[3] Linear villages, it is true, are not uncommon along the western seaboard,

[1] Lord George Hill, *Gweedore*, 26.
[2] *Parliamentary Gazetteer* (1844), s.v. Bantry.
[3] Caesar Otway, *A Tour in Connaught* (1839), 353.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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361 arranged in some semblance of order along a road, but they are likely to be late colonies or the result of land re-distribution. As a visitor during the famine years wrote: 'The villages in which the greater portion of the people (of western Ireland) reside . . . consist of collections of hovels . . . grouped without regularity, formed of clay, or loose stone with green sods stuffed into the interstices'.[1] A little earlier, in 1839, the people of Achill Island are described as 'living in little cabins built in loose clusters varying from twenty to eighty in a cluster: these clusters or villages are sixteen in number'.[2] Still earlier, in 1802, Donegal is said to have had about 500 'villages', which were, however, 'dispersing daily into separate habitations and holdings'.[3]

361 342 The absence of any discernible plan as compared with many English or German villages has led visiting critics to regard the clachan as a reflection of the disordered Irish mentality. The word that best fits the untidy house cluster is one often heard in Ireland—'throughother'—which is properly applied and probably owes its origin to the scattered plots of the openfield (Fig. 6). Despite this apparently casual disorder the selection of a house-site was a matter for the most careful deliberation. Shelter from the prevailing winds was a prime need, so that the houses seem to snuggle together, generally located in a hollow or on a lee slope. To this end a man might throw his hat into the air on a day of wild winds and mark its falling place. But it seems it was at all costs necessary to avoid giving offence to the fairies by building across one of their 'pads'. In Tyrone it is said that 'no man would build a house till he had stuck a new spade into the earth'. If the fairies had not removed it overnight the site was safe.[4] In Cavan I was told that a small line of stones was first built on the site: if it was intact next morning the fairies were not displeased. The ill-luck which dogged the person who had inadvertently built his house across a fairy pad is one of the many themes which crop up in the stories one hears throughout the country.

[1] J. Pim, *The Condition and Prospects of Ireland* (1848), 116.
[2] Edward Newman in *The Magazine of Natural History* (1839), 569–77.
[3] James McParlan, *Statistical Survey of the County of Donegal* (1802), 64.
[4] Rose Shaw, *Carleton's Country* (1930), 15.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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BALLY AND BOOLEY

These clachans, while some had their speciality such as weaving or thatching, were concerned primarily and almost exclusively with agriculture and attracted none of the elements of the true village, whether church, inn or shops. Itinerant 'tinkers and tailors' paid periodic visits and with the pedlars and beggars brought news of other districts, but the economic and social needs of the hamlet were met by periodic visits to the fairs and by seasonal gatherings of various kinds. Within the group the bonds of kinship were close and strong, and ties of marriage carrying reciprocal responsibilities linked one clachan with another within small neighbourhood units consisting of perhaps half a dozen townlands. With the close kinship bonds went corresponding rivalries with adjacent neighbourhoods which provided social motive force by acting as incentives. These rivalries broke out characteristically into feuds and blood-letting at fairs and gatherings. But in later days, at any rate, internal rivalries and squabbles were more conspicuous and found more opportunities within overgrown kinship groups which had become too complicated to function smoothly. A few illustrations will suffice.

One visitor explained the presence of the back-doors on clustered houses, for which we shall offer other explanations in the following chapter, by the fact that the women needed an escape when too hotly engaged in rows with neighbours.[1] Joint ownership sometimes extended to single animals with strange results. For example: 'three men were concerned in one horse; but the poor brute was rendered useless, as the unfortunate foot of the supernumerary leg remained unshod . . . and accordingly it became quite lame.[2] We are reminded of the difficulties arising from the joint ownership of fruit trees in some Mediterranean countries. It was in Donegal too that I heard of a ram which died of exposure when it was part-shorn by one of its joint owners. In the same district a man wishing to build a wall around one of his fields but unable to get his neighbour to agree, deliberately erected it a yard or two on his own side of the boundary so that the neighbour would still be forced to herd or tether his cow to prevent it trespassing on the

[1] Isaac Weld, *Statistical Survey of Roscommon* (1832), 475.
[2] Lord George Hill, *Gweedore*, 23.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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narrow strip between the boundary and the wall. 'Fights, trespasses, confusion, disputes and assaults, were the natural and unavoidable consequences of the rundale system.'[1] On the other hand we must recall the extreme reluctance with which the system was at last abandoned, the social benefits it conferred on members of the kin. The reforming landlord, Lord George Hill, comments that 'the pleasure the people feel in assembling and chatting together, made them consider the removal of the houses, from the clusters or hamlets in which they were generally built to the separate farms, a great grievance.'[2] Another writer gives as the basis of the tenants' grievance, 'the recollection of nights of social concourse, of aid in sickness, of sympathy in joy and sorrow, of combined operations of defence against bailiff or gauger'.[3] There were ceilidhes and spinning parties, and many a clachan had its shanachie (story-teller) and its fiddler or piper—usually a maimed or simple person—who accompanied with folk-tunes. Folk-songs, occupational airs and legendary tales were kept alive in this way. Apart from the co-operation implicit in the openfield system there was a good deal of sharing in other ways. Thus there would be a communal corn-kiln for drying the grain before grinding, a knocking stone for pounding barley, and in some districts a corbelled stone sweat-house which took the place of the village doctor in treating rheumatic pains.

The openfield which lay around the cluster, normally on the down-hill side so that the vital manure could be 'sliped' down-slope (see Chapter XIII), seems to have been kept in cultivation in some areas at least year after year. This was the infield, in contrast to the outfield, the outlying rough pasture bits of which were temporarily reclaimed and then left to rest for long periods. We shall return to the plough and spade and methods of cultivation in another place but may refer here to the allotment of the holdings in the common fields. Although in many parts of the country the holdings, by the end of the eighteenth century, had become fixed in their scattered parcels on the several qualities of land in the openfield, there is abundant

[1] Lord George Hill, *Gweedore*, 22.
[2] ibid., 42.
[3] W. R. Wilde, *Dublin University Magazine*, 41 (1853), 20.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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them occasionally. To render the latter more palatable they are said to have mixed it with the leaves of the wild sorrel.'

In Achill a few old people still nostalgically accompany their cows to the old booleying grounds, but everywhere else the system has died out completely. Many hilly districts, however, are open runs for summering stock which are visited periodically or placed in charge of a herd. This system was prevalent in the early nineteenth century and is thus described in the Ordnance Survey Letters for County Londonderry, parish of Upper Cumber. 'Herds are partially employed, males and females indiscriminately, who tend the cattle in the summer on the moors and mountain farms. They are from ten to sixteen years old and are paid for that half year from 15s. to 21s. In winter they return to their parents, who are burdened with their support from November to May.' In theory the total number of grazing units in a commonage is calculated and the units allotted to each landholder in proportion to the size of his farm—originally to his share in the openfield. The unit is known as a collop (in Ulster and Mayo a sum—the Scottish equivalent) and is the amount of pasturage that will support a cow. The sums may be taken up by other animals, and a scale which varies slightly from one district to another gives the equation. Thus a sum equals three parts of a horse, four sheep, eight goats or twenty geese. With the decline in the utilization of the hill-pastures and the general breakdown of traditional practices, grazing rights on commonages are neglected and stinting is rarely operative.

The observant walker in the hills will notice in sheltered hollows by the banks of streams clusters of grassy mounds set in a green sward, or it may be small piles of stones under some rocky outcrop. These are the only tangible relics of the booley houses, and in most parts of Ireland they were deserted so long ago that the shepherd will tell you they are the remains of Danes' houses.

Only where the huts were stone-built are the remains easily recognizable. In Achill Island they are oval in shape, or rectangular with rounded corners, and many have the opposite doorways which are still characteristic of the winter dwellings. In some bogland areas where place-names and traditions tell

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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of booleying there are no discernible traces, for the flimsy constructions in such sites, built without stones, have been buried under the peat. Frequently the huts were built into a sloping bank of peat or gravel, and the roofs were constructed of bog timbers covered by long strips of sod and thatched with heather secured with ropes. We shall see that long roofing-sods are typical of traditional peasant dwellings to this day, and their use may go back to pastoral origins. It was observed

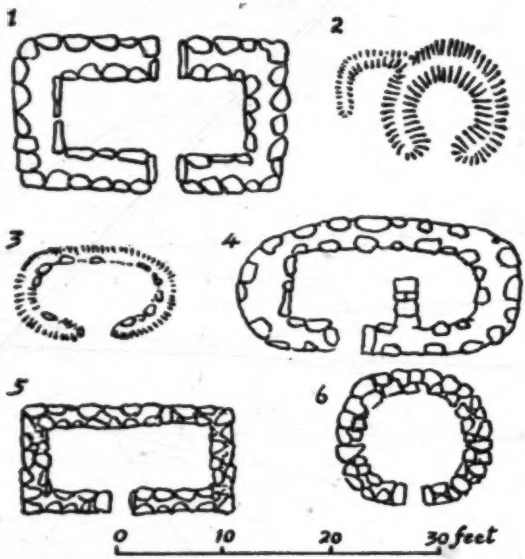

FIG. 7. Plans of booley houses. Nos. 1, 4, 5, Achill Island; Nos. 2 and 3, Mourne Mountains, Co. Down; No. 6, Co. Mayo.

near Newry in 1690 that the cabins were built so conveniently of hurdles and long turf 'that they can remove them in summer towards the mountains, and bring them down to the valleys in winter.'[1] Circular hut-foundations are also found, some built of stones, others of sods, and the former may well have had corbelled stone roofs. The huts are generally in groups of

[1]George Story, *An Impartial History of the Wars of Ireland* (1691), 2nd ed. (1693), 16.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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342 from five to twenty, either clustered or spaced within calling
361 distance of each other. They are nearly always located near running water, usually near the headwaters of mountain streams, where patches of bright green grass and such characteristic flowers as tormentil may reveal their sites even when almost all trace has gone (Fig. 7).

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

THE THATCHED HOUSE

Poverty and rack-renting undoubtedly contributed to the long survival of such conditions, but they ultimately derive from cultural forces of wide distribution and high antiquity. It used to be said in defence of the custom of sharing the house with the cow that she helped to keep the house warm and that in turn the cow yielded more milk. Inquire further and you will find that it was thought to be unlucky if the cow was not able to get a glimpse of the fire. Behind this belief there lies faith in the power of the fire to dispel evil spirits. The end of the house farthest from the hearth is commonly referred to as the 'bottom-end', a relic of the time when it housed the cattle, for it was obviously wise to have the floor sloping down towards the byre. Many cabins and huts were constructed as lean-tos against a bog-face or an old fence (ditch). Hence the saying applied, for example, to the Cappagh district of Co. Armagh, that 'you can't cross a ditch or you'll fall down a chimney'. It should be recalled that in Ireland the tenants built and repaired their own houses with, normally, no assistance from the landlord, and there was little inducement to build houses to last longer than the lease of say twenty-one years. Only in Ulster under the custom of tenant right could outgoing tenants claim recompense from the new tenants for improvements made.

The simple rectangular shape is a feature of west European house-types from prehistoric times and has characterized some houses of Neolithic age excavated in Ireland. Such houses were usually built of timber, clay or sods (scraws). Circular or oval houses are of similar antiquity, whether made of stone or of wattles, but although a few round-ended rectangular houses survive, the round hut of corbelled stone slabs is used today only as a store place or animal house (Chapter IX). The houses of Achill Island are described by several writers about 1840 as circular or oval in shape, built of boulders without mortar and having the thatched roof continuous with the walls. They had neither chimneys nor windows, and the single door was sometimes not more than four feet high. None of these houses is now inhabited though their ruins can be seen. The round or oval house, however, has probably contributed to certain features of the traditional rectangular-house in some areas, for example the central hearth and the hipped roof which is proper

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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native to the country. Around the coasts the sycamore is almost the only tree that persists, for it will stand up to the salt-laden gales everywhere save on the most exposed parts of the west coast. R. U. Sayce has recorded the belief, from Montgomeryshire, that 'sycamore trees keep the fairies away and stop them spoiling the milk',[1] but this bit of lore cannot be of any great antiquity since the tree did not reach Britain from its home in the mountain belt of southern Europe until the sixteenth century. It presumably arose from the association of the tree with the farmyard. In Ireland the sycamore probably came in with the early seventeenth century planters, though the beech may be a medieval or even older introduction. Both trees had many economic uses, especially for dry-coopering, that is the manufacture of provision casks and butter firkins, and the sycamore is an excellent wood for turnery. Later, as the linen industry became mechanized, the beetling mills demanded sycamore for the great beam of the engine and beech for the vertical beetles.

The lay-out of farm buildings seems to have been, in the native single-farms, as haphazard and formless as was that of the houses themselves in an old clachan. As separate farms with outbuildings ('offices') became fashionable improvements after the middle of the eighteenth century, the latter were built for convenience of access and they were put close to the farmhouse, either attached to one end or lying parallel to provide a windbreak. Only in the planted areas does one find old examples of planned 'courtyard farms' where the house and offices enclose a square or rectangular yard. I fancy the stone or wooden 'hovel-stands' with their picturesque mushroom-like staddle-stones are also confined to planted districts. In the west a favourite method of making stacks is to build them about a central pole. (See p. 164.)

The wayside style is another absentee in the native Irish countryside, as is the footpath which is its companion. Short-cuts are rarely worth while in a land of tiny fields, and if there is a right of way there is sure to be a tolerable road. In fact there are so many farm lanes and access ways to mountain, seashore or bog that an economist might regard the amount of land so taken out of cultivation as excessive. It has been

[1] R. U. Sayce, *Montgomeryshire Collections*, 45 (1938).

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

the famous cattle droves.[1] The town lies on one of the sinuous gravel ridges (eskers) which lead eastwards from the limestone grazing grounds of east Galway to the crossing of the Shannon and then thread their way through a maze of bogs to reach the headwaters of the Irish Sea rivers. The eskers provide dry footing for roads some of which are routeways of great antiquity, and down to the coming of railways they served as drove roads along which cattle and sheep were taken to the fattening pastures and markets of the eastern lowlands. The date of the great fair of Ballinasloe, in early October, corresponds with that of the largest trysts at Crieff and Falkirk, and would have allowed time for the movement of livestock to eastern Ireland or to the English fairs by All-Hallows or Martinmas.

No study of the Irish drove roads has been made as for those of Scotland and Wales, but it seems probable that the movement of livestock along routes from west to east has been developing since the Middle Ages, when its logical outcome was the export trade in hides from the Irish Sea ports. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries exports largely took the form of salt beef and butter, but since the early nineteenth century the store cattle trade has been so dominant that it has latterly accounted for half the total export trade of southern Ireland. It involves a movement of cattle not only from west to east but from small farms to large, and from scanty grazings to the lush fattening pastures of Meath or the English lowlands. Apart from small strings of beasts on their way to local fairs, the cattle droves are today most in evidence in the crowded dockside streets of the ports where they are herded on to the cross-channel boats, but until quite recently donkeys and goats purchased at fairs in the west still travelled to the ports on the hoof. The drover-dealers who accompanied them were colourful characters whose experience stood them in good stead in the wider world. These dealers in the unwanted residues of the countryside—in rags and scrap as well as asses and goats—have often set up as rag-and-scrap merchants in the large towns along their routes from Belfast and Dublin to the English fairs, and one of them became Lord Mayor of a Scottish city. Others made big money as pedlars of cloth in America or Australia. Most of these 'pahvees',

[1] A. R. B. Haldane, *The Drove Roads of Scotland.*

[1] [i.e., Ballinasloe.—Analyst]

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

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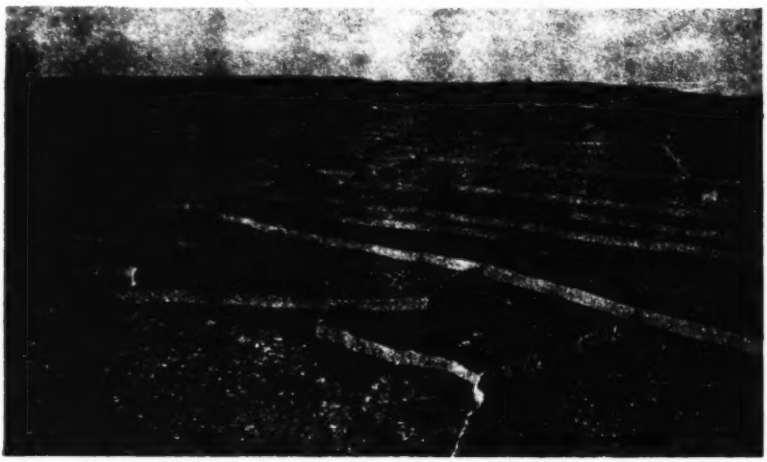

Figure 1. The back of the island from the lighthouse

with an Iron Age culture about 350 B.C.; but only in 1961 were earlier Neolithic, or possibly Mesolithic, implements discovered. When my wife and I arrived in the island for a seven week visit during the summer of 1962, we were presented with three slate axe heads which had been unearthed by road workers the previous December. It is possible that they are Mesolithic, for the industry never has been dated accurately.

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[114]

The principal Copper-Bronze Age monuments of Inis Beag are Megalithic tombs and burial mounds, and possibly kitchen middens and semi-subterranean stone dwellings, called *clochán*. Small gallery graves incorporated into lately built stone walls are common, but it appears that they never have been examined by prehistorians, for there is no record of them in the literature. Archeologists seldom have visited the back of the island where the prehistoric and medieval populations, contrary to present day opinion, may have centered. None of the Inis Beag *clochán* have been dated, but it is known that they were lived in by clerics and ascetics during the Middle Ages, and were still used as living quarters in a nearby island early last century. It is as difficult to ascertain the age of burial mounds and middens in Ireland as it is of stone houses, because they too were formed over several historical periods. Burial mounds of earth and stone, termed respectively tumuli and cairns by archeologists, first were erected during the Copper-Bronze Age and continued to be built into the early modern period (although not for funerary purposes). There are numerous mounds in Inis Beag, but in many instances it is hard to distinguish on sight cairns from *clochán* in their ruinous, overgrown condition. The islanders regard both types of structures as burial sites. Middens can be dated from the Mesolithic to the end of the medieval era. Most of the island middens are associated with dwelling places from the Middle Ages, but those located near the mouths of caves in the limestone cliffs of the terraces

[814]

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

175 [702] [648] The castle and watch tower still dominate the Inis Beag skyline, and the latter serves as a landmark for fishermen posting their nets. Another landmark, at the southeast tip of the island, is a 110-feet-high lighthouse built during the 1850s.

175 173 731 244 Written sources and local traditions disagree as to the effects of the great famine on Inis Beag. Some observers claim that the potato blight completely destroyed island crops, and the folk were forced to depend on secondary agricultural commodities, livestock, fish, and limpets in order to survive; conversely, others maintain that the blight did not penetrate the island until much later. According to my Inis Beag respondents, the blight did contaminate some gardens, but enough [437] were spared so that the islanders were not greatly inconvenienced. In fact, potatoes [161] were exported by some farmers to help feed starving mainlanders. Between 1841 and 1851, the population of Inis Beag increased by 62 persons, at a time when [167] most other Irish communities had dwindling populations. The first record of substantial emigration from the island, mostly to the United States, was in 1822.

Contemporary Setting

131 Inis Beag has a northeast to southwest topographical axis, at right angles to its geological axis, and is a mile and three-quarters in length and a quarter of a [161] mile less in width. A population of 350 persons inhabits four villages, and the [361] island comprises 1440 acres. When giving directions informally, the folk refer to [823] the beach side as the north side and the back of the island bordering the Atlantic as the south side; then, the sound separating Inis Beag from Inis Thiar becomes the west side, and the sound between Inis Beag and the mainland the east side. I will follow this practice when describing various geographical and other features 133 in this chapter. Between the mainland and Inis Beag, a reef extending from the island far out into the east sound is a menace to shipping; it was on this reef within 200 yards of the shore that the freighter ran aground in 1960.

133 311 A large beach and a contiguous stretch of common land, which together make up over 200 of the island's 1440 acres, dominate the north side of Inis Beag. The beach is known as the "strand," following English usage, and lies west and north of the common land, about midway between the sounds (see Figs. 4, 9, and 10). It is thought that several hundred years ago arable land existed where the common land does today, and the strand was very narrow; but gradually sand accumulated, widening the beach and burying more and more farm land as it crept eastward. If one examines the Ordnance Survey Maps of 1841 and 1902, the slow encroachment of the sand can be noted. The common land was about half its present size in 1841, and 60 years later almost 70 acres of cultivable soil had been engulfed. The tops of fences projecting above the surface at the present time attest to the shifting of the sand, as does the buried church of the patron saint, and sand now threatens fertile plots on the east side of the island.

[361] There are six major and several minor terraces in Inis Beag, of which the lower two underlie the strand, the common land, and two of the four villages. The lower terraces are broad and the upper ones narrow and precipitous, while weather-

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

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Figure 4. Low Village and Inis Thiar from the castle

ing has obscured in most places the disconformities between strata. Four rift 133
valleys indent the terraces, and the eastern one runs the entire length of the island 311
to the ocean and holds a 90-feet-deep fresh water lake (see Fig. 7). This valley [361]
and two of the other three to the west of it running half the length of the island
form two promontories on the upper terraces of which the other villages are
situated. Indenting only the lower terraces, the fourth rift is a minor one; it forms [172]
the valley in which the axe heads were discovered. Wells are found in each of the
rift valleys where shale strata are bared. The four villages, from west to east, are
Low, High, Castle, and Terrace.

Located in Low Village (see Fig. 4) are two grocery stores, known as 361
"shops," and an old coast guard station, and in High Village are the post office 34
and church; other buildings of importance are the new school on the common
land and the lighthouse at the back of the island. I already have described the
monuments of historical significance so need not consider them further. The older 366
of the two shops in Inis Beag is situated at the southwest margin of the common
land, while the other stands close to the rocky shore at the north end of the com-
munity. Simply a large, narrow room on the ground floor of the two-story dwelling 366
of its owner, each shop also serves as a public house, or "pub," where wines, spirits, 276
beer, stout, soft drinks, and tobacco are sold. Benches along wall and counter serve
the customers who linger, and purchases are made across the counter or in a small
enclosed room near the door, called the "snug." The usual occupants of the shop
are men who come to drink, smoke, visit with their neighbors, and sometimes
purchase goods for their families. Women and children when buying provisions [443]
usually enter the snug for privacy and confer with the shopkeeper through an
aperture opening on the counter. At night, the snug allows small groups of men to [521]
discuss matters of a private nature over drinks.

Coast guard personnel first were assigned to Inis Beag shortly after the 000

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

3

The Village and the Family

Village Differences

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103 LOW VILLAGE RECEIVES ITS NAME from its position on the lowest terrace of Inis Beag (see Fig. 4). It borders the ocean and strand, while High Village to the east is located in a wide expanse south of the common land formed by a concavity in the upper terraces. On the western of the two promontories high above the beach, separated from Low and Terrace by rift valleys, is Castle Village. Below it are the cemetery enclosing the church of the patron saint and the new school, and above it are the castle, the ruined monastery, the Napoleonic watch [138] tower, and what remains of the old school next to the tower. The Ordnance Survey [823] Maps place the highest elevation of Inis Beag in the vicinity of the tower, but the folk claim that the most elevated portion of the crest is above High. Terrace Village, on the promontory to the east, presents a breath-taking view of the lake (see Fig. 7), the sound, and towering mountains and cliffs along the mainland coast. Low merges with High, but Castle and Terrace, because they are located on high terraces and bounded by rift valleys, are isolated units. Terrace is aligned north and south, but the other three settlements are aligned roughly east and west. The southernmost house of Terrace and the westernmost one of Low are approximately 1500 yards apart, and the intervening distance can be walked comfortably in less than 12 minutes.

Below are the number of inhabited houses and the population of each village:

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	Houses	*Population*
Low Village	24	119
High Village	16	59
Castle Village	17	99
Terrace Village	14	73

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

361 It is apparent from the size of these settlements that some such term as hamlet might be more appropriate than village, but I have chosen to follow island usage. Within each village, no house is further than 50 yards from its nearest neighbor, some even sharing the same gable, and a myriad of paths serve to link single and grouped dwellings with a main road.

184 Although the traditions of Inis Beag and islands in its vicinity can be designated as a subculture of the Irish system taken as a whole, nevertheless there are marked differences in custom between them. One might suppose that cultural variation would be slight in an island as small and stable as Inis Beag, but [829] the remarkable fact is that there are differences among the four villages. The folk [628] are well aware of inter-village, inter-island, and island-mainland cultural variability, and they also possess a well defined image of their own way of life. At this point, I would like to examine the attitudes of the people toward their own communities, Inis Thiar, the mainland, themselves, and outsiders who visit or live among them.

829 High and Castle Villages attract the fewest opinions. The inhabitants of 628 the former are accused of arriving late at island affairs, especially to mass in the 184 chapel so close at hand, and dwellers in the latter of keeping ferocious dogs which [231] bark at night and molest visitors. Until recently, each Castle household had from two to four dogs, and it was possible for those living in Low to know when a visitor making a night visit had arrived in Castle by the outcry of the animals. [512] Castle people, like those in Terrace, milk their cows earlier in the day than do [823] other islanders, and since both settlements are located on the upper terraces and command exceptional views of the mainland coast and sea around, the dwellers in each claim that their panorama is the most inspiring.

829 The numerous attitudes toward Low and Terrace Villages mostly reflect 628 their positions in the island and resultant differential acculturation; generally 184 speaking, the local culture becomes more traditional as one moves eastward from 177 Low, the jetty, and the strand. It is often said that Terrace folk "are strangers to 178 the rest of us" and resemble the inhabitants of Inis Thiar, whom many writers and [342] scientists claim are the most traditional of Irish peasants. More cottages are [461] thatched and the indigenous costume is more in evidence in Terrace than elsewhere, and the villagers there are the earliest risers and hardest workers and tend to arrive early for events, in contradistinction to their High neighbors. Families in Terrace are considered more closely knit and cooperative and the people more [275] self-reliant than those in the other communities. The men spend less time in the pubs, do not need drink to "give them courage" to sing and dance, and are livelier and more extroverted at parties. Not only do Terrace folk believe that their village is best located as to beauty of land and seascape, but they claim that it is quieter [241] and the air is healthier there than elsewhere in Inis Beag. Another Terrace custom often cited is that of farmers using all four types of seaweed as fertilizers and setting their gardens in the same manner; farmers in the other settlements use [421] only two or three kinds of seaweed and set their gardens in a variety of ways. Lastly, the practice of seeking wrack is most prevalent among Terrace men. The freighter ran aground near Terrace, and the men there were said to have acquired more salvage than other islanders as a result of their being close to the ship and

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the major source of their livelihood; production is mainly for subsistence and is carried on with a simple technology, using the digging stick, spade, and scythe as primary implements; the island folk participate in a money economy, but barter still persists; a low standard of living prevails, and the birth rate is high; the family is of central importance, and marriage figures prominently as a provision of economic welfare; the island is integrated into the county and national governments and is subject to their laws; the people have long been exposed to urban influences and have borrowed cultural forms from other rural areas on the mainland, integrating them into a relatively stable system; and, finally, the experience of living under English rule for centuries has created in the islanders an attitude of dependence on—yet hostility toward—government which continues to this day. The only conditions in Inis Beag which run counter to those found in most other peasant communities are low death and illiteracy rates and bilateral, rather than unilineal, descent (although inheritance is patrilineal).

Inis Beag culture also characterizes people of nearby islands, and the traditions of the several together might be regarded as forming a subculture of the total Irish system. Many island customs are shared with rural peasants on the mainland (where numerous regional subcultures exist), and some are part of a broader European matrix. The island has experienced considerable cultural change since the establishment of the Congested Districts Board (forerunner of the Gaeltacht) in 1891 and the growth of tourism in this century. But conditions there still approximate those which must have prevailed two generations ago, and earlier, throughout this region of peasant Ireland.

Inis Beag has a population of approximately 350 persons living in seventy-one "cottages" distributed among four settlements, called "villages." Bordering a "strand" and a large tract of common land on the northeastern side of the island are a series of limestone terraces, separated by water-bearing shales and faced by small cliffs, on which the villages are situated. Most of the arable land is found on this side, where the shales have been broken down by weathering and alien soils deposited by wind and by ice of the Weichsel glacier. Over many generations, the islanders have deepened these soils and created new soils on rock surfaces by adding seaweed, sand, and human manure. On the southwestern side of Inis Beag, known as the "back of the island," limestone pavements slope rather evenly, almost as the gentle dip of the strata, from the crest of the highest terrace to the sea a mile away. The bared surfaces are intersected in all directions by crevices,

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which contain a large portion of the natural flora—herbs and shrubs—of the island. Stone fences delimit many hundreds of plots which compose most of the two-square-mile land surface of Inis Beag.

The island boasts a post office with radio-telephone facilities, a "national school" in which three teachers instruct ninety pupils in the seven "standards," two provision shops with attached "pubs," a former coast guard station now housing the nurse and a knitting industry which employs local girls, a lighthouse, and a chapel served by a curate who resides nearby. Inis Beag lacks electricity and running water, and the only vehicles are several ass-drawn carts which are able to travel the narrow, fence-bordered trails. A small "steamer" carrying supplies, passengers, and mail to and from a mainland port visits the island at least once each week. That Inis Beag has experienced far less cultural change than other island communities of Ireland is largely due to the fact that, in absence of a deep water quay, the steamer has had to stand off the strand and be met by "canoes." Most of the tourists who come to the island stay only for the hours that the steamer is anchored and go ashore mainly for the thrill of riding in the canoes, which the island men row with consummate skill. Insofar as I can discover, the inhabitants of Inis Beag are less prone to visit the mainland than are the peoples of other Irish islands.

INIS BEAG
HISTORY AND CULTURE[2]

The prehistory and history of Inis Beag are recorded dramatically in a multitude of monuments and artifacts of stone and metal, including Neolithic axe-heads and kitchen middens, Copper-Bronze Age gallery grave tombs and burial mounds of earth and stone, an Iron Age promontory fort, and medieval Christian monasteries, churches, cemeteries, stone houses, and a sacred well, as well as a three-story tower house built by the political overlords of the island. Irish nativists claim that the contemporary folk are lineal descendants of ancient, once civilized

[2] The culture described herein is that of 1959–1960 and excludes important changes which have occurred since then, such as those resulting from the introduction of television, a summer language school for pupils from the mainland, and free secondary education.